

THE COSMOPOLITAN WARRIOR? VIEWS OF PATRIOTISM AND CITIZENSHIP
FROM PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANY CONTRACTORS WITH IMPLICATIONS
FOR NATIONALITY

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Jessica S. Lohmann
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Committee:

J. Luke Stedel for Daniel Rothbart

Committee Chair

J. Luke Stedel for Karyna Karastelina

J. Luke Stedel for Derek Lutterbeck

J. Luke Stedel

Graduate Program
Coordinator

J. Luke Stedel for Andrea Berdoli

Director, School for Conflict
Analysis and Research

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Fairfax, VA
University of Malta
Valletta, Malta

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science at George Mason University, and the degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Malta

by

Jessica S. Lohmann
Bachelor of Arts
University of California Davis, 2005

Director: Daniel Rothbart, Professor
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my loving boyfriend Jaime and my wonderful family, especially my mother Suzi, for offering me support and encouragement throughout my studies, from Malta to DC.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
A. Research Questions	4
B. Hypotheses	9
Chapter 2: Theoretical Background.....	13
A. Theories of National Identity	18
B. History & Definition of a Private Military Company	26
<i>i. Defining PMCs</i>	27
<i>ii. The Evolution of Mercenaries and PMCs</i>	30
<i>iii. Benefits of Using PMCs</i>	32
<i>iv. Risks of Using PMCs</i>	33
<i>v. Perceptions of PMCs</i>	35
C. Theory of Cognitive Dissonance	37
Chapter 3: Methods	40
A. Methodology	41
B. Methods & Data Collection	43
C. Data Analysis Methods	46
Chapter 4: Results	49
A. How the Media Views Contractors	49
B. What the Demographics Suggest	62
C. How Contractors View Themselves	68
Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion	97
A. Reexamining the Research Questions, Hypotheses & Theoretical Background	99
B. Limitations of the Research and Future Research Possibilities	107
C. Concluding Remarks	111
REFERENCES	114

Abstract

THE COSMOPOLITAN WARRIOR? VIEWS OF PATRIOTISM AND CITIZENSHIP FROM PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANY CONTRACTORS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONALITY

Jessica S. Lohmann, M.S., M.A.

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Dissertation Director: Dr. Daniel Rothbart

The increased use of private military company (PMC) contractors brings to light important questions of the possible dangers and advantages of their use. While many researchers have debated the topic when it comes to public policy, legal issues, and efficiency, there remains a dearth of information regarding who these contractors are. In an increasingly globalized world these contractors are choosing to work for private companies in times of war instead of their own state militaries. This leads to questions surrounding issues of national identity and citizenships. Using existing theories of national identity, cognitive dissonance and existing information on PMCs this study looks at the views of PMC contractors. In an attempt to research the effects of PMC contractors on traditional views of nationality and sovereignty, this study drew upon interviews of twelve PMC contractors, conducted a media content analysis on the PMC Blackwater and researched existing data and logistics on the use of PMCs. The findings point to negative

perceptions and misinterpretations of PMC contractors by mass media yet a strong sense of national identity felt by nearly all contractors interviewed. All those interviewed were former military personnel or police officers and all but one was found to be very patriotic. PMC contractors were guided in who they would work for and what they would do by their national identities along with personal ethical and moral standards. The dangers that come with the increased use of PMC contractors include a lack of regulation, yet the contractors themselves do not pose a strong risk to national security as most take contracts as a result of their strong allegiance to their nation.

Chapter 1: Introduction

It can be argued that private military companies (PMC) have existed as long as the nation-state.¹ While PMCs are not new their increased use in recent wars has brought up intriguing questions about the impacts and effects they have in war. Many have focused on the dangers of using PMCs and possible issues of accountability and legality.² Understanding the pros and cons of PMC use is vital as more and more governments rely on their services. While researchers have been studying the issue for quite some time, very few have looked at those who are joining PMCs. Who are these individuals? What sort of work are they willing to take? What are their backgrounds?

This paper examines the growing use of PMCs and the effects that it is having on national identity. Since military service is often seen as the ultimate form of sacrifice and citizenship to one's nation,³ the increased use of PMC contractors brings to light intriguing questions about national identity, citizenship and sacrifice. Contractors are often portrayed as mercenaries who are willing to fight for the largest sum of money.⁴

However, this study hypothesized that many contractors would still hold a sense of

¹ Charles Tilly, "How War Made States, and Vice Versa," in *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1992* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 67-95.

² Andrew Alexandra, Marina Caparini, and Deane-Peter Baker, *Private military and security companies: ethics, policies and civil-military relations* (Routledge, 2008); Kateri Carmola, *Private security contractors and new wars: risk, law, and ethics* (Routledge, 2009); Fabien Mathieu and Nick Dearden, "Corporate Mercenaries: The Threat of Private Military & Security Companies," *Review of African Political Economy* 34, no. 114 (December 1, 2007): 744-755; P. W Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*, Updated ed. (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2008).

³ Williamson M. Evers, *National service: pro & con* (Hoover Institution Press, 1990).

⁴ Robert Young Pelton, *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror*, 1st ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006).

national identity that would dictate who they were willing to work for and what they were willing to do. Parts A and B of this introduction will further explain the research questions and hypothesis that drove the research for this study.

The research for this study was framed around theories of social identity and cognitive dissonance. There was also an examination of current research in the field of PMCs. The literature review of these theories and topics can be found in Chapter 2. Social identities play a large role in everyday life and this role is often magnified in times of conflict.⁵ The role that identity plays for PMC contractors is very important. The traditional views of national identity are challenged by contractors who go to work for corporations in times of war, instead of state militaries. It is believed that this fact causes cognitive dissonance which in turn leads contractors to justify their decision to work for a PMC instead of the militaries.

This study attempted to scratch the surface of how the increased use of PMC contractors has changed the traditional views of nationality and citizenship through interviewing twelve former and current PMC contractors as well as analyzing existing data and media coverage of the topic. Chapter 3 goes into a comprehensive explanation of the methodology and methods used for the study. A qualitative flexible design was used in a three pronged approach of research in which interviews, a media content analysis and data analysis were used. This approach allowed for a design that was able to develop as results were collected. The use of these forms of data collection (interviews,

⁵ H. Tajfel and J. C Turner, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict," *The social psychology of intergroup relations* 33 (1979): 47; Vamik D. Volkan, *Bloodlines: from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism* (Westview Press, 1998).

media content analysis and data analysis) allowed for a stronger analysis of the results and different points of view on the same topic.

The results are presented in Chapter 4. The data content analysis proved to be the most difficult area to research as the information about contractors was widely varied and often accused of being inaccurate.⁶ However, a few major trends were found including the increasing reliance on PMCs in times of war which has led to an increase in spending. The media content analysis revealed a negative image of contractors that has increased since the beginning of the Iraq war. Finally, the interviews with PMC contractors yielded the most results of all three areas of analysis. Overall contractors were found to be very strongly connected with their national identities. Many more trends and themes emerged in all the areas of analysis and can be found in the results section.

The importance of the findings will be discussed in Chapter 5 as well as future research possibilities. The results were reexamined with the theories of national identity and cognitive dissonance. While the importance of the research is presented, there were also limitations to the study including sample size and the homogeneous population used. The findings and limitations lend themselves to further research possibilities to expand the field and add to the knowledge of PMC contractors.

All of the topics from this introduction are expanded on extensively in their respective sections. This research conducted on PMCs is important to understanding the

⁶ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*, August 31, 2011, https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://wartimecontracting.gov/docs/CWC_FinalReport-lowres.pdf&embedded=true&chrome=true&pli=1; Moshe Schwartz and Joyprada Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*, CRS Report for Congress, May 13, 2011.

possible dangers and advantages of the increased use of PMCs. In an increasingly interconnected world it is also important to understand how ideas of national identity and citizenship are changing.

A. Research Questions

There is a notion that participation in the military is at the heart of citizenship and nationality.⁷ Many see the ultimate form of citizenship as the sacrifice to fight, kill and be killed to protect one's country. Notions of patriotism, citizenship and nationality have long been centered on the military.⁸ As Ryan Kelty explains, "the military as an institution takes great pains to instill in its members the notion that, because they wear the uniform of the U.S. military, they are separate and distinct from the ordinary civilian population... This is done in part to establish a sense of identity and solidarity within the military, partially to legitimate the service members' role as one who may legitimately use deadly force when engaging the enemy, and also in part to increase the professional prestige of the institution and its members."⁹ However, there has been a recent increase in the use of Private Military Companies (PMC) which challenges this notion of sacrifice for one's nation.¹⁰ A lot of research has been conducted on the increase in use of PMCs. The research has mainly focused on two main areas: (1) the lack of law and international

⁷ Evers, *National service*; Mateo Taussig-Rubbo, "Outsourcing Sacrifice: The Labor of Private Military Contractors" 21, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 101-64.

⁸ Evers, *National service*; Taussig-Rubbo, "Outsourcing Sacrifice."

⁹ Ryan Kelty, "Citizen Soldiers and Civilian Contractors: Soldiers' Unit Cohesion and Retention Attitudes in the 'Total Force,'" *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 37, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 135.

¹⁰ Carmola, *Private security contractors and new wars*; "Toward a Postmodern military: the United States as a Paradigm," in *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14-31.

consensus surrounding PMCs operations and (2) the cost effectiveness of PMCs.¹¹ While much of this research has focused on macro-level analysis and national security issues, there is only a small amount of literature emerging that focuses on the contractors that decide to join PMCs.¹²

This research aimed to find out what the implications of this increase in PMCs has been on the traditional views of patriotism, citizenship and nationality by focusing on contractors themselves. In an attempt to research this topic and gain data on the issue the following research questions are what drove the study:

- How do PMC contractors understand themselves as citizens?
- Do PMC contractors' understanding of themselves as citizens' call into question traditional views of patriotism, citizenship and sovereignty?
- How does PMC contractors' understanding of themselves as citizens affect their national identities and sense of self?
- What effect does PMC contractors' understanding of themselves as citizens and their national identities have in conflicts?
- Do PMC contractors understanding of themselves as citizens affect what sort of conflicts PMCs are willing to engage in or not willing to engage in and why?

The first question, "How do PMC contractors understand themselves as citizens?" was the main research question. It was asked to understand what contractors' think of themselves. As stated earlier, there is a plethora of data on PMCs and the advantages and

¹¹ Martha Minow, "Outsourcing Power: How Privatizing Military Efforts Challenges Accountability, Professionalism, and Democracy," *Boston College Law Review* 46, no. 5 (September 2005): 989-1026.

¹² Kelty, "Citizen Soldiers and Civilian Contractors."

disadvantages of their use by the state. Yet there is a gap in the research in actually finding out who the individuals working with PMCs are.¹³ Gary Schaub and Volker Franke grappled with the questions of what motivates contractors and how they identify themselves. They concluded that a contractor identity, similar to that of a military identity, has begun to form.¹⁴ Further research is needed to dig deeper into their findings of an existing contractor culture or identity. It is important to understand how contractors view themselves as citizens to understand how their perceptions affect how they act in conflict.

Question two, “Do PMC contractors’ understanding of themselves as citizens’ call into question traditional views of patriotism, citizenship and sovereignty?” was a subsidiary question to the first one. In an increasingly interconnected world it is important to understand how views of patriotism, citizenship and sovereignty are changing. This is important both from a national security and policy standpoint. This is especially important for PMC contractors who take sides in conflicts but may not have strong connections to those they are fighting for. Ideologies of war are almost always driven by narratives and symbols of citizenship and sovereignty.¹⁵ As David Isenberg explains, “traditionally, the ultimate symbol of the sovereignty of a nation is its ability to monopolize the means of violence” and “in modern times these forces have been motivated by issues of nationalism and ideology.”¹⁶ The modern trend of privatizing certain military operations with PMCs calls into question these motivations. There is a

¹³ Ibid.; Gary Schaub and Volker Franke, “Contractors as Military Professionals?,” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College* 39, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 88-104.

¹⁴ Schaub and Franke, “Contractors as Military Professionals?”.

¹⁵ David Isenberg, *Shadow force: private security contractors in Iraq* (ABC-CLIO, 2008).

¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

need to know why some join PMCs and risk their lives for a corporation instead of reenlisting in the military or not joining the military at all.

The third question, “How does PMC contractors’ understanding of themselves as citizens affect their national identities and sense of self?” was also subsidiary to the first, main question. The group identities of those in conflict are almost always more salient than those not in conflict.¹⁷ To understand how PMC contractors view themselves as citizens it is important to look at how being a contractor affects national identities and their sense of self. Since contractors are not involved in conflicts in a traditional sense (being that of the military) they may have a stronger sense of individual, rather than group identities, including national identities. This question aims to find out the salience of the nation identity of contractors.

The fourth and fifth questions, “What effect does PMC contractors’ understanding of themselves as citizens and their national identities have in conflicts?” and “Do PMC contractors understanding of themselves as citizens affect what sort of conflicts PMCs are willing to engage in or not willing to engage in and why?” are related. The role identity plays in conflict is not always a driving factor but is an important element.¹⁸ Marc Ross argued that “interpretations are central to conflict behavior”¹⁹ and that these interpretations are facilitated through cultural identities. As a result it is important to understand how contractors identify themselves and how this leads to their interpretations of conflicts. National identity is often more salient than usual when one’s nation is

¹⁷ J. C Deschamps and T. Devos, “Regarding the relationship between social identity and personal identity.,” in *Social Identity: International Perspectives* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 1-12.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Marc Howard Ross, *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4.

fighting or in conflict with another.²⁰ This is evident when looking at how individuals are able to dehumanize the ‘other’ and see themselves as good in war.²¹ However, PMC contractors blur the lines between ‘us’ and ‘them.’²² There has been contention over how much PMC contractors should be incorporated with the military in conflict settings. While there often remains an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ in times of war, many in the military do not consider contractors as fully being ‘us.’²³ So where do they fit in? These questions aimed to find out how contractors fit in with the ‘in-group’ and if they attach themselves to the identities of those they are fighting for or view their role as just a job. In finding out how contractors view their national identities it is important to see if they are willing to work for any conflict or if they have criteria to justify what they will and will not take part in. Connections can be made to the broader question of how they view their sense of self and citizenship by knowing what sorts of conflicts contractors are willing to engage in or not.

These five questions were posed in a way to understand the main topic of how contractors’ perceptions of themselves affect citizenship, patriotism and nationality. The findings of this study are significant because how contractors view themselves has important implications for national security and policy making. The increased reliance on PMCs makes this an issue that states cannot afford to ignore. The purpose of this study was to begin to fill in the gaps of research on the affects of PMCs. While further research

²⁰ Charles Tilly, *Identities, boundaries, and social ties* (Paradigm Publishers, 2005).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kelty, “Citizen Soldiers and Civilian Contractors.”

²³ Ibid.

is still needed, by looking at how contractors working for PMCs view themselves connections can be made to how effective and reliable PMCs really are.

B. Hypotheses

Before conducting the research of this study, a series of hypotheses were made as to what the results would show based on previous research. The main hypothesis for this research topic was that PMC contractors have a less salient national identity than the average soldier and will think of themselves as more individualistic than collective. However theories of national identity²⁴ and cognitive dissonance theory²⁵ will allow contractors to still maintain a sense of national identity while not always working for national interests. While this hypothesis as a whole was found to be imperfect, some aspects of it were confirmed by the study. This will be discussed in the results section but it is important to understand where the hypotheses were derived from.

As will be explained in further detail in the theoretical background section, cognitive dissonance theory explains that individuals do not like contradictions in their lives and attempt to rid themselves of contradictions by justifying them or ignoring them.²⁶ As Leon Festinger (who developed Cognitive Dissonance Theory) explained, nearly all individuals have contradictions in their values, beliefs and actions. These contradictions cause an uncomfortable feeling and people will reason with themselves to

²⁴ Thomas H. Eriksen, "Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict: The Significance of Personal Experiences," in *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 42-68; M. B Brewer, "Ingroup identification and intergroup conflict," *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction* (2001): 17-41; Tilly, *Identities, boundaries, and social ties*; Volkan, *Bloodlines*; Karina Valentinovna Korostelina, "Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities," in *Social identity and conflict: structures, dynamics, and implications* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 181-199.

²⁵ Leon Festinger, *A theory of cognitive dissonance* (Stanford University Press, 1957).

²⁶ Ibid.

explain these contradictions away.²⁷ An inherent contradiction for PMC contractors is how to rationalize the sacrifice they are making for a PMC instead of serving in a traditional military role. It was believed that contractors would justify working for PMCs instead of reenlisting or joining their country's militaries by explaining that the pay and benefits are better and the contracts fit their personal needs more.

It was also believed that contractors' identities have been dehumanized by mass media and popular culture through misperceptions and negative coverage, many times being referred to as mercenaries. The media does not report much about PMCs unless a scandal has broken out. This can be seen in the media's attention to high profile contractor cases such as those of Blackwater and Abu Ghraib.²⁸ Zoe Salzman explained that the mass media's reaction to these scandals were oversimplified and over generalized all PMC contractors, "Much of this outcry has assumed that private military contractors are no more than mercenaries, with all of the ugly connotations that term carries with it."²⁹ The focus on a small number of high profile scandals has tainted contractors' reputations as many see them as warmongering individuals just out to earn a lot of money.³⁰ It was hypothesized that this is not the case. It was believed contractors' would justify their decisions to go into conflict zones on more than just grounds for money. This idea was backed by a study conducted by Schaub and Franke in which money was found as an important motivator for contractors, but was preceded by four other motivators

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Marcus Hedahl, "Blood and Blackwaters: A Call to Arms for the Profession of Arms.," *Journal of Military Ethics* 8, no. 1 (January 2009): 19-33.

²⁹ Zoe Salzman, "Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 40 (2007): 855.

³⁰ Salzman, "Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation."

including “To face and meet new challenges” and “To serve my country.”³¹ While it was thought money would play an important role over continuing in or joining the military, it was believed that contractors’ are likely to have limits on the types of conflicts they are willing to engage in and the contracts that they take.

The study also expected to suggest that while the use of PMC contractors is not as dangerous as many make it out to be they are still a risk for states that rely on them. If there is a diminished sense of national identity and pride contractors will not be as committed to the cause as traditional military personnel. A strong sense of national identity is the best way to ensure loyalty in conflict. In fact this is why militaries formed in the first place. In the fourteenth century almost all European wars were fought with mercenary armies. However, this changed as kings and lords learned that they could gain greater control over their territories by creating a national military, “the costs and political risks of large-scale mercenary forces led those states’ rulers to enlist more and more of their own citizens, and to substitute them for foreign mercenaries where possible.”³² While contractors are most likely to have limits to whom and for what cause they will work for they are still able to pick and chose where they work and are more likely to leave a cause. The increased reliance on contractors has been shown to be dangerous in many ways including a skills drain of Special Forces, lack of regulation and law, and bloated budgets given by governments through PMC lobbying efforts.³³ This

³¹ Schaub and Franke, “Contractors as Military Professionals?,” 92.

³² Tilly, “How War Made States, and Vice Versa,” 82.

³³ Minow, “Outsourcing Power: How Privatizing Military Efforts Challenges Accountability, Professionalism, and Democracy.”

study hypothesized there may be another reason why PMCs may pose a risk; that of contractors' diminished sense of collective identity to those states they are working for.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

The research questions and topic call for an understanding of many areas of research. While there is a dearth of information in the field on PMC contractor views there is a plethora of information on national identity, PMCs and cognitive dissonance theory. The theories revolving around these three issues will be utilized and built upon in the results and discussion section. A solid background is essential to understanding the importance of the research and gives it wider meaning.

By blending theories of identity, PMCs and cognitive dissonance, this study was able to analyze its findings from multiple angles, therefore providing more insight. Many studies have been done to research how identities shape the ways in which individuals and groups act.³⁴ Others have focused on PMCs; from the benefits and risks³⁵ to their relationships with service members.³⁶ Furthermore, psychologists have studied how

³⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin & spread of nationalism* (Random House, Inc, 1983); Brewer, "Ingroup identification and intergroup conflict"; Korostelina, "Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities"; Tajfel and Turner, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict"; Tilly, *Identities, boundaries, and social ties*; Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

³⁵ Mark Calaguas, "Military Privatization: Efficiency or Anarchy?," *The Chicago-Kent Journal of International and Comparative Law* 6 (Spring 2006): 58-81; Salzman, "Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation"; Minow, "Outsourcing Power: How Privatizing Military Efforts Challenges Accountability, Professionalism, and Democracy"; *From Mercenaries to Market: The Rise and Regulation of Private Military Companies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁶ Volker Franke and Lindy Heinecken, "Adjusting to Peace: Military Values in a Cross-National Comparison.," *Armed Forces & Society* (0095327X) 27, no. 4 (Summer2001 2001): 567-595; Volker C. Franke, "Duty, Honor, Country: The Social Identity of West Point Cadets.," *Armed Forces & Society* (0095327X) 26, no. 2 (Winter2000 2000): 175-12; Volker C. Franke, "Generation X and the Military: A Comparison of Attitudes and Values Between West Point Cadets and College Students.," *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 29, no. 1 (Summer2001 2001): 92.

dissonance and inconsistent behavior is explained away by individuals.³⁷ Yet, not many people have looked at how these three topics (identity, PMCs and cognition) work together.

Some overlap has taken place, such as Schaub's and Franke's study in 2009 which sought to find inter-group and outer-group perceptions between those in the military and PMC contractors.³⁸ There have also been a plethora of studies that compare group identities and ideas of nationalism to the military.³⁹ While not directly related to this study, such research is useful to provide background and history to the issue. By knowing how inclusive or exclusive militaries have been towards minority groups such as women⁴⁰ or gays and lesbians⁴¹ one can begin to understand the contemporary culture of war. Rosen and Martin found in 1998 that sexual harassment was widespread in the U.S. military, but that cases of harassment varied per unit. Units with more exposure to female service members, strong leadership and who were combat ready had less cases of sexual abuse than those units with few females, poor leadership and who were unprepared for combat.⁴² A group that was formerly males only, with a continuing macho identity, has

³⁷ Festinger, *A theory of cognitive dissonance*; Leon Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails* (Pinter & Martin Ltd, 2009); Leon Festinger, "Cognitive Dissonance," *Scientific American* 207 (1962): 93-99; Ann Buckmaster and Kenneth McKenzie, "Cognitive Dissonance and Students' Opinions on the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq.," *Defence Studies* 9, no. 1 (March 2009): 118-128.

³⁸ Schaub and Franke, "Contractors as Military Professionals?"

³⁹ Taussig-Rubbo, "Outsourcing Sacrifice"; A. Belkin and M. S Embser-Herbert, "A modest proposal: Privacy as a flawed rationale for the exclusion of gays and lesbians from the US Military," *International Security* 27, no. 2 (2002): 178-197; D. M Iskra, "Attitudes toward Expanding Roles for Navy Women at Sea," *Armed Forces & Society* 33, no. 2 (2007): 203; E. Kier, "Discrimination and military cohesion: An organizational perspective," *Beyond Zero Tolerance: Discrimination in Military Culture* (1999): 25-52; Leora N. Rosen and Lee Martin, "Sexual Harassment, Cohesion, and Combat Readiness in U.S. Army Support Units," *Armed Forces & Society* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 221 -244.

⁴⁰ Iskra, "Attitudes toward Expanding Roles for Navy Women at Sea"; Rosen and Martin, "Sexual Harassment, Cohesion, and Combat Readiness in U.S. Army Support Units."

⁴¹ Belkin and Embser-Herbert, "A modest proposal."

⁴² Rosen and Martin, "Sexual Harassment, Cohesion, and Combat Readiness in U.S. Army Support Units."

begun to allow females into the 'in-group.' Similarly, the U.S. military has begun to allow gays and lesbians to openly serve, however the acceptance of gays and lesbians is debated.⁴³ Unit cohesion has often been cited as a mechanism to keep certain groups out of the military.⁴⁴ However, the lines of in-group and out-group members are constantly changing in the military.

Theories of national identity will help in understanding what role identity plays in conflict. Social Identity Theory was one of the first theories to explain how all individuals categorize themselves into groups.⁴⁵ The need to define oneself in a group with distinctions from other groups (or out-groups) has been shown to take place in almost all arenas of life from gender, to ethnicity, to religion, and finally to nationality.⁴⁶ Nationalistic ideologies have been shown to drive conflict and motivate citizens to take up arms.⁴⁷ As a result, this study needed to understand how PMC contractors' identify themselves as citizens to know why they are willing to take up a cause in a non-traditional military setting. To do this a firm understanding of identity theories was needed. By studying contractors' views through an identity framework one can begin to understand how traditional views of nationality are being affected by the rise of PMCs.

It was also essential to define what a Private Military Company is and how it was defined in this study. The term PMC is often ambiguous and is used in many different

⁴³ Ed O'Keefe, "Celebration and concern mark the end of 'don't ask, don't tell'", September 20, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/celebration-and-concern-mark-the-end-of-dont-ask-dont-tell/2011/09/16/gIQAC0hffK_story.html; U.S. Department of Defense, "Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'" (November 30, 2010).

⁴⁴ Belkin and Embser-Herbert, "A modest proposal."

⁴⁵ Tajfel and Turner, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict."

⁴⁶ Brewer, "Ingroup identification and intergroup conflict"; Volkan, *Bloodlines*; Ross, *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*; Korostelina, "Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities."

⁴⁷ Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

ways. Some use the terms PMC and mercenaries interchangeably but many others object to this usage as it can confuse the roles of PMC contractors. Most who object to the use of PMCs and mercenaries as synonyms make the distinction of PMCs as contracted companies used to provide security related tasks or training to armed forces, while mercenaries are defined as individuals who offer armed services (offensive and defensive) to the highest bidder.⁴⁸ This study focused on a definition of PMCs that was restricted to companies who take government contracts to supply contractors for defensive security or training purposes. This definition draws a clear line between rouge mercenaries and PMCs.

Understanding the evolution of private military companies will build a basic understanding of how PMCs became the entities they are today. Hiring outside help to fight a nations' war is not a new concept. Since the beginning of nation building in Europe, mercenaries and private armies were employed to win battles for the state.⁴⁹ However, states began to cut down on their use of outside help for their own wars in an attempt to gain loyalty and a stronger sense of citizenship.⁵⁰ While mercenaries and PMCs never fully went away, there was a time when they faded to the background.⁵¹ The resurgence of PMCs over the last decade brings up interesting questions of loyalty, trust and allegiance that led to their demise centuries ago. By examining the evolution of

⁴⁸ Pelton, *Licensed to Kill*; Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: the rise of the world's most powerful mercenary army* (Nation Books, 2008); Doug Brooks, "Messiahs or Mercenaries? The Future of International Private Military Services.," *International Peacekeeping* (13533312) 7, no. 4 (Winter2000 2000): 129; Schaub and Franke, "Contractors as Military Professionals?"

⁴⁹ Tilly, "How War Made States, and Vice Versa."

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *From Mercenaries to Market*.

PMCs, a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between their historic and modern uses can be deciphered.

It is also important to be up to date on debates of the positives and negatives of using PMCs since these perceptions are important to how the PMC identity is understood. Many worry about the lack of regulations and disciplines of contractors. They worry this may lead to lapses causing human rights violations, breaches of national security and lawlessness in conflict zones.⁵² Conversely, others focus on the benefits of using PMCs including cost savings, freeing up military forces and gaining specialized training.⁵³ The positive and negative perceptions of PMCs are vital to understanding modern day contractors' identities. While there are valid arguments for and against the rise in PMC use, this information was used to understand how this affects contractors themselves.

Finally, understanding cognitive dissonance theory is important as the lines between nationality, military and corporate contractors begin to mix. Cognitive dissonance theory is used to explain how contradictions in peoples' lives create an uncomfortable feeling. As a result individuals work to lessen these contradictions, either by changing their behavior or often by making excuses.⁵⁴ Since traditionally military service is seen as the ultimate form of sacrifice⁵⁵ it was important to understand how contractors justified their choice of joining a PMC instead of enlisting (or re-enlisting) in

⁵² Carmola, *Private security contractors and new wars*; Minow, "Outsourcing Power: How Privatizing Military Efforts Challenges Accountability, Professionalism, and Democracy"; Singer, *Corporate Warriors*.

⁵³ Calaguas, "Military Privatization: Efficiency or Anarchy?"; Pelton, *Licensed to Kill*.

⁵⁴ Festinger, "Cognitive Dissonance"; Festinger, *A theory of cognitive dissonance*; Festinger, "Cognitive Dissonance"; "Dissonance.," *New Republic* 230, no. 20 (May 31, 2004): 9; Buckmaster and McKenzie, "Cognitive Dissonance and Students' Opinions on the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq."

⁵⁵ Taussig-Rubbo, "Outsourcing Sacrifice."

the armed forces. Cognitive dissonance theory shed light on how PMC contractors are able to reason with the fact that they work for corporations instead of their nation.

Before the research methods and findings of this study are discussed an in depth literature review of all important topics will be given. This study formed a solid foundation for its research by taking the small amount of information about PMC contractors' views and combining them with research and theories of national identity, PMCs and cognitive dissonance.

A. Theories of National Identity

In 1954 Leon Festinger developed the Social Comparison Theory which explained how individuals compare themselves to others as a way of self assessment.⁵⁶ He argued that comparisons are usually between similar people and they drive individuals to become better. This theory was built upon by Henri Tajfel in 1959 when he argued that individuals often overemphasize these differences and form categories accordingly.⁵⁷ Throughout the 60s and 70s these theories were built upon and in 1979 Tajfel and John Turner developed Social Identity Theory which explained the process in which individuals categorize themselves into groups.⁵⁸ They argued that all individuals have a need to categorize themselves into groups. To do so they must believe and perceive that these social identities and groups exist. As a result, these identity groups are socially constructed and rely on perceptions of both in-group and out-group members. These perceptions create stereotypes and norms that are associated with any one group and its

⁵⁶ Festinger, *A theory of cognitive dissonance*.

⁵⁷ H. Tajfel, "Quantitative Judgement in Social Perception," *British Journal of Psychology* 50, no. 1 (February 1, 1959): 16-29.

⁵⁸ Tajfel and Turner, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict."

members. Joining groups and categorizing oneself in this context serves to clarify social roles and boundaries as well as promote self enhancement through in-group favoritism. Social groups create ‘prototypes’ which are people who embody the major ideas, beliefs, norms and values of that group identity. The prototype is used as the measuring stick of how much an individual conforms to the group.⁵⁹ These categorizations serve a very important purpose as they give people an identity, letting them know who they are and where they stand, as well as providing self-esteem and a sense of purpose.⁶⁰

Tajfel and Turner argued that social identity differs from personal identity (or as they called it, “interpersonal versus intergroup behavior”⁶¹). While social identity pertains to the social categorization of the self or others, personal identity pertains to self-categorization that highlights the uniqueness of an individual. As individuals’ social identity becomes more salient their personal identity diminishes in importance.⁶² While there is a symbiotic give and take relationship between social identity and personal identity, Tajfel and Turner argued that it is very improbable that one identity could take over and eclipse the other.⁶³ Yet, interestingly enough, the example they gave for the “intergroup extreme are provided by the behavior of soldiers from opposing armies during battle.”⁶⁴ This is because “the more intense an intergroup conflict, the more likely it is that the individuals who are members of the opposing groups will behave toward

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 34.

⁶² Tajfel and Turner, “An integrative theory of intergroup conflict.”

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 34.

each other as a function of their respective group membership, rather than in terms of their individual characteristics or individual relationships.”⁶⁵

Adding to this idea, Karina Korostelina argued that three factors influence the salience of social identity: level of difference, competitiveness and intergroup relations.⁶⁶ The more people perceive differences between groups, feel competitive and view similarities within their groups the more likely they are to have high salience of social identity and low salience of personal identity.⁶⁷ Marilynn Brewer developed the optimal distinctiveness theory to describe the push and pull between individuals’ need for acceptance with their need for individuality.⁶⁸ According to optimal distinctiveness theory, individuals need to feel a sense of belonging while at the same time have a need to be distinct from others. These contrary needs are fulfilled by contrasting one’s social identity group with other groups. In forming social identities (including national identity) group members categorize in-group and out-group members. Individuals join groups due to their need for positive self-esteem. As a result, there is a tendency to show positive emotions towards one’s own group and often this in-group positivity leads to out-group prejudice.⁶⁹ However, this “comparison (whether interpersonal or intergroup) is not inherently competitive.”⁷⁰ What makes this comparison become competitive and leads to

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Korostelina, “Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities.”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ M. B Brewer, “Optimal distinctiveness, social identity, and the self,” *Handbook of self and identity* (2003): 480–491.

⁶⁹ Brewer, “Ingroup identification and intergroup conflict.”

⁷⁰ Ibid., 24.

prejudice and sometime hatred is when comparisons are used for self-esteem and “perceptions of ‘we are good’” change to “perceptions of ‘we are better’.”⁷¹

Many theorists and researchers have applied the theories of social identities to nationality. When the concept of national identity began to be debated in academia many chose one of two sides, “whether ethnic or national communities are created more or less consciously, or whether they grow organically, out of preexisting cultural communities.”⁷² Some argued that the concepts of nationalism arose through ethnicities that had developed over centuries.⁷³ Conversely, others began to argue that the modern concept of the nation had spurred nationalism, thus they believed nationalism to be a modern phenomenon not tied to ancient ethnicities.⁷⁴ Examples of multicultural communities such as the Philippians, Indonesia and even the United States have been used as examples in support of the argument that national identities are not tied to ethnicity, but instead a modern feeling of allegiance to one’s nation.⁷⁵ Thomas Eriksen summed up this argument of a constructed national identity well when he wrote, “Ethnicity or nationalism, then, become the political reifications or constructions of a particular authorized version of a culture, freezing that which naturally flows, erecting artificial boundaries where they did not exist before, trimming and shaping the past to fit present needs, and inventing traditions where no organic traditions exist, or are not

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Eriksen, “Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict: The Significance of Personal Experiences,” 44.

⁷³ Anthony D. Smith, *National identity* (University of Nevada Press, 1991); Anthony David Smith, *The Ethnic origins of nations* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1988).

⁷⁴ Anderson, *Imagined communities*; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Blackwell, 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York University Press, 1997).

⁷⁵ Anderson, *Imagined communities*; Eriksen, “Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict: The Significance of Personal Experiences.”

adequate, to ensure a sense of continuity with the past.”⁷⁶ While often ethnicity and nationalism are intertwined, it is apparent that not all forms of national identities are tied to ethnicity.

There is no doubt that national identity plays a large role in societies today. Jose Salazar believed that “of all the variants of social identity, national identity is perhaps the one that has had the most dramatic impact on historical events, with both positive and negative consequences for humankind.”⁷⁷ He argued that national identity is so important because it has shaped how nations interact, give support for wars, and has led to multiple conflicts over who defines what the national identity is. While some argue that ideas of nationalism are coming to an end as the world becomes more globalized and “cosmopolitan,”⁷⁸ Salazar argued that this interconnectedness has actually reinforced ethnic and national identities. This is because social comparisons are more readily available, making in-group and out-group distinctions more salient.⁷⁹

Charles Tilly has written widely on the topic of national identity. In his book *Identities, Boundries and Social Ties*, Tilly demonstrated how social categories of in-groups had been created by the state through citizenship.⁸⁰ Citizenship is the result of a contract between the state and all citizens, stipulating the rights and obligations of all.⁸¹ A boundary is created between those who are granted certain rights and have obligations as

⁷⁶ Eriksen, “Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict: The Significance of Personal Experiences,” 46.

⁷⁷ Jose M. Salazar, “Social Identity and National Identity,” in *Social identity: international perspectives* (Sage, 1998), 114.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁷⁹ Salazar, “Social Identity and National Identity.”

⁸⁰ Tilly, *Identities, boundaries, and social ties*.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

citizens and those who do not. Once the distinction is made between in-group and out-group members, social identities function with in-group positivity.⁸² What is interesting about the citizenship identity is that it is a rather new creation, developed in the 1700s and 1800s as a way to galvanize support for armies and taxes.⁸³ The social boundary that is created between the citizen and the non-citizen has led to competition and often conflict. Tilly explained that narratives of nationalism and patriotism often pit nationalities against each other and have led to wars and ethnic cleansing.⁸⁴

Korostelina solidified the idea of national identity, describing it as an imagined social group which defines itself through shared history and group ideology.⁸⁵ She argued that three factors are needed to acquire a national identity. First, an individual must adopt elements of that national identity including “beliefs, values, assumptions and expectations that make up national identity as a collective product.”⁸⁶ Second, the individual must develop an orientation towards the nation. Third, the individual must define themselves as a member of that nation. She formulated a structure of national identity based on salience, satisfaction and adoption of national culture. She also put forth three types of meaning that groups give to national identity: ethnic, multicultural and civic. The ethnic concept is when a nation views their national identity to be “built around a core ethnic community into which ethnic minorities should assimilate.”⁸⁷ Multicultural national identities are based on an idea of equality and acceptance, in which minorities have the

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Tilly, “How War Made States, and Vice Versa.”

⁸⁴ Tilly, *Identities, boundaries, and social ties*.

⁸⁵ Korostelina, “Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities.”

⁸⁶ Ibid., 184.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 186.

same rights as the majority. A civic concept of national identity views cultural and ethnic differences as insignificant as the rule of law mandates how individuals should act and they all must integrate to these laws. The type of identity that a nation holds is important because “the concept of national identity can influence the readiness of both a majority and minority to fight with other groups and can increase or decrease the influence of other conflict indicators.”⁸⁸ While all three types of national identity Korostelina discussed (ethnic, multicultural and civic) differ, they can all be a driving force for conflict due to in-group and out-group comparisons.

Vamik Volkan has written much about ethnic concepts of national identities, but his writings also touched nationalism of all sorts.⁸⁹ He discussed how national identity has been used since the American and French Revolutions to galvanize populations towards political interests. In times of conflict, national identities often pull people to lend support for their nations’ cause. During a war or conflict, nationalism often elicits a sense of superiority of in-group members over those they are in conflict with. This often leads to dehumanization which allows for brutal acts to be committed against foes, because they are seen as vermin or scum. There is also the phenomena of minor differences, “Enemy neighbors who do share similarities will stress and elevate the importance of major differences, such as language, skin color, religion, history, food, music, dance, or folklore and exaggerate the importance of minor differences.”⁹⁰ He went on to explain how this exaggeration of minor differences can lead to horrific acts in conflicts, “people will kill to reinforce their ethnic or national group’s distinction from

⁸⁸ Ibid., 187.

⁸⁹ Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 108.

the enemy group, however minuscule that distinction may be.”⁹¹ This need to exaggerate differences has been seen in many wars around the world.

Eriksen explained this exaggeration of differences when explaining the role of identity in the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Fijian Coup-D’etat and Hinduism in India.⁹² In all three cases minor differences between groups were used to galvanize populations towards violence through nationalist rhetoric. While the Serbs, Croats and Muslims had a common history and had lived near each other for generations, collective myths, invisible boundaries and violent narratives were used to create a schism in the population of Yugoslavia.⁹³ In Fiji, the same sort of rhetoric and myths were used by Fijians against Indians in the 1980s to force a coup-D’etat. Finally, in India, the Hindutva movement pushed for a Hindu nation, making Islam enemy number one. What is interesting is that in each of these cases myths and narratives were developed to fit nationalistic ideologies. These societies had lived together for decades or even centuries, but modern nationalistic identities had morphed their stories into that of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’⁹⁴

The literature on identity points to a psychological need to belong to a group.⁹⁵ There is a fine line between a healthy balance of personal and social identities where an individual can still see themselves as unique whilst ‘fitting in’ to larger groups.⁹⁶ National identity, like most social identities, also serves psychological functions but can be used to

⁹¹ Ibid., 109.

⁹² Eriksen, “Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict: The Significance of Personal Experiences.”

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Tajfel and Turner, “An integrative theory of intergroup conflict”; Korostelina, “Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities”; Brewer, “Ingroup identification and intergroup conflict.”

⁹⁶ Brewer, “Ingroup identification and intergroup conflict.”

galvanize a population towards violence.⁹⁷ National identities become more salient in times of conflict⁹⁸ and this leads to dehumanization and exaggeration of minor difference.⁹⁹ It is obvious that national identity plays a large role in interstate conflict which is of much interest for this research as national identities of contractors can come into question. Questions emerge as to how nationality fits in (or does not fit in) with national identities when contractors are serving a mission for a corporation instead of for their nation.

B. History & Definition of a Private Military Company

Private military companies have been used as a mechanism to help fight and support war efforts for centuries.¹⁰⁰ Starting in the fifteenth century, European states were employing private armies to fight their battles.¹⁰¹ The recent resurgence of the use of PMCs has brought up many questions including who these people are and what their role should be.¹⁰² Contractors vary widely in their roles and as a result it is essential to narrow down the definition of PMCs and make distinctions from other entities, such as mercenaries and Private Security Companies (PSCs).¹⁰³ Keeping up to date on the debate of the benefits and risks of using PMCs allows insight into the possible dangers of the rise in PMC use, but also acknowledges their use as helpful in certain circumstances. This

⁹⁷ Korostelina, "Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities."

⁹⁸ Tilly, *Identities, boundaries, and social ties*; Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

⁹⁹ Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

¹⁰⁰ Brooks, "Messiahs or Mercenaries?"; Tilly, "How War Made States, and Vice Versa"; Salzman, "Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation"; Schaub and Franke, "Contractors as Military Professionals?"

¹⁰¹ Tilly, "How War Made States, and Vice Versa."

¹⁰² Alexandra, Caparini, and Baker, *Private military and security companies*; Carmola, *Private security contractors and new wars*; Salzman, "Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation."

¹⁰³ Brooks, "Messiahs or Mercenaries?"; Schaub and Franke, "Contractors as Military Professionals?"

debate affects the perceptions of PMCs which is important to how PMC contractors view themselves and how they justify their role in the conflicts they serve.

i. Defining PMCs

The use of contractors in conflict zones varies widely. Not only do states use contractors but private corporations and increasingly Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) use the services of contractors for services anywhere from armed security to cooks.¹⁰⁴ It is important to note that not all contractors working in conflict zones are used for conflict situations. For example, the U.S. has employed contractors in Iraq to build bases, work as electricians and even prepare meals for the U.S. armed forces.¹⁰⁵ Some see any of these contractors as working for PMCs in what is the loosest definition of PMC possible. Yet to fully understand PMCs operations and those who work for them it is important to narrow down the definition to something more concrete. This can be difficult since the term ‘Private Military Company’ has been used in many ways and therefore it does not have a consistent definition.

Many make a distinction between Private Security Companies (PSCs) and Private Military Companies (PMCs). Doug Brooks made this distinction by defining PSCs as “companies that provide passive security in high-risk conflict environments – predominantly to private companies” and PMCs as “companies that provide more active services such as military training or offensive combat operations, generally to individual

¹⁰⁴ Deborah D Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁵ Pratap Chatterjee, *Iraq, Inc: a profitable occupation* (Seven Stories Press, 2004).

states or international organizations such as the United Nations.”¹⁰⁶ The main distinction for Brooks is the lending of security services to private companies versus lending these services to states or international organizations. Schaub and Franke also made this distinction and went on to explain five categories of services the PMCs offer: “armed operational combat support, armed security services, unarmed operational combat support, military- or security-related advice and training and military support services.”¹⁰⁷ The main distinction made between PMCs and PSCs is their military function. This study used the definition of PMCs based on Brooks definition of active military or training services¹⁰⁸ and based on the five categories offered by Schaub and Franke.¹⁰⁹

According to Peter Singer, PMCs can be “organized into three broad sectors: Military Provider Firms, Military Consultant Firms, and Military Support Firms.”¹¹⁰ Military Support Firms are said to be the most widely used and provide support services such as supplies, logistics and technical support. Military Provider Firms engage in fighting and take a more active role in the conflict.¹¹¹ This study will not focus on Military Support Firms and will only look at Military Provider Firms that provide defensive services. However, Military Consultant Firms who offer “advisory and training services integral to the operation and restructuring of the client’s armed forces”¹¹² will be central to the study.

¹⁰⁶ Brooks, “Messiahs or Mercenaries?,” 129.

¹⁰⁷ Schaub and Franke, “Contractors as Military Professionals?,” 90.

¹⁰⁸ Brooks, “Messiahs or Mercenaries?”.

¹⁰⁹ Schaub and Franke, “Contractors as Military Professionals?”.

¹¹⁰ Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 91.

¹¹¹ Singer, *Corporate Warriors*.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 95.

There is also a major distinction to be made between PMCs and mercenaries. Some individuals do not make a distinction between PMCs and mercenaries which is evident with how widely the terms have been used interchangeably. “The term ‘mercenary’ has been used to describe everything from individuals killing for hire, to troops raised by one country working for another, to PSCs providing military services to their own country.”¹¹³ While the terms are often interchanged in the media, it will be important for this study to make clear a distinction between PMC and mercenaries. Mercenaries are individuals who lend their military services to the highest bidders. “Freelance mercenaries are very different from PMC/PSCs in terms of operations, clients, accountability and the capacity of the international community to regulate their activities.”¹¹⁴ Mercenaries often lack the same legitimacy that comes with PMCs which sign legitimate contracts for the states and international organizations for which they work.¹¹⁵ Another major distinction made between mercenaries and PMCs are the roles they play in conflict. Mercenaries have been targeted in many international laws which discourage their use.¹¹⁶ This is because mercenaries are often defined as individuals who play an active combatant role in conflicts while PMCs are only supposed to assist in operations, but not actively engage in battle.¹¹⁷ “The International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training for Mercenaries was opened for signature in 1989 and eventually came into force after its twenty-second ratification in September

¹¹³ Avant, *The Market for Force*, 22.

¹¹⁴ Brooks, “Messiahs or Mercenaries?,” 130.

¹¹⁵ Brooks, “Messiahs or Mercenaries?”.

¹¹⁶ Salzman, “Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

2001.”¹¹⁸ The distinction between PMCs and mercenaries is important as this study focused on contractors that work for PMCs with legitimate government contracts and will not be touching on the issues of mercenaries.

ii. The Evolution of Mercenaries and PMCs

Charles Tilly explained that, throughout history, war making and state building have been intrinsically tied to one another. War’s role in building up the nation-state in Europe has a long history of mercenary action and eventually nationalist ideologies. “From the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries – the critical period for European state formation – armies deployed through much of Europe consisted largely of mercenaries recruited by great lords and military entrepreneurs.”¹¹⁹ These mercenary armies hailed from countries all throughout Europe and often served for the highest bidder, usually with no national loyalties. As the cost of war began to rise with the price of mercenaries, weapons and supplies, governments began to rely on taxation for funds. The price of private mercenaries was becoming too much for states to handle and the risk of defection was high.

Tilly argued that waging war and being successful is reliant on gaining revenue through taxation. He explained how monopoly of force and monopoly of taxation go hand and hand and competitors to this monopoly are challenged. This is essential for the state building process. “With the eighteenth century, furthermore, the costs and political risks of large-scale mercenary forces led those states’ rulers to enlist more and more of

¹¹⁸ *From Mercenaries to Market*, 251.

¹¹⁹ Tilly, “How War Made States, and Vice Versa,” 81.

their own citizens, and to substitute them for foreign mercenaries where possible.”¹²⁰ This shift in ideology was what led to the formation of nation building and a sense of national pride. The idea of conscription, or mandatory service, started to be utilized in Europe to build national armies. Conscription was complementary to citizenship, as the rights given in citizenship also came with duties such as mandatory military service and taxation. Tilly made a compelling argument of how wars made states, and through this explains the evolution of armed forces from paid mercenaries to nationalist armies.¹²¹

Simon Chesterman and Chia Lehnhardt also explained the evolution of mercenary armies through their use by European states in the fifteenth centuries, to the use of national armies through the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century, up to the modern use of PMCs and their rise since the end of the Cold War.¹²² They explained the movement in the twentieth century to outlaw mercenaries worldwide. This mainly stemmed from the use of mercenaries in post-colonial African civil wars. The international community made it clear that they did not support such mercenary activities. However, they also made a distinction between mercenaries and PMCs, arguing that the recent use of PMCs is far more regulated and controlled than mercenaries. PMCs have been widely used since the Cold War in an attempt to lower defense budgets. PMCs have been marketed like never before, and their use in modern conflicts is unlikely to diminish.¹²³

¹²⁰ Ibid., 82.

¹²¹ Tilly, “How War Made States, and Vice Versa.”

¹²² *From Mercenaries to Market*.

¹²³ Ibid.

iii. Benefits of Using PMCs

The recent rise in the use of PMCs has spurred a lot of controversy. While a lot of criticism in the academic world has been negative, governments and PMCs themselves have discussed the benefits of using PMC contractors. There are three main factors Mark Calaguas laid out as the reasons why PMC services are utilized today: economic, political and social.¹²⁴ One of the main arguments of support for the increase in use of PMCs is the amount of money they save for the government. The actual savings are often debated, but governments argue that millions are saved by contracting out military services.

Specialized military services are thought to save the most money for governments. “The U.S. Military has found itself increasingly dependent on private contractors as a result of technological innovations by civilians. In particular, advances in information technology have required the military to seek outside help...one of the reasons why employees of private companies wield such control over these types of equipment is that ‘most military personnel lack the aptitude of length of service to develop the requisite skills’ to maintain and operate these machines.”¹²⁵ Often obscure specialties are contracted out because it simply does not make sense for the military to invest in such small markets and the training of individuals in these areas.

Another main argument in support of the use of PMCs has been that contractors free up military personnel who are needed elsewhere. “These advocates argue that by hiring professionals to do discrete jobs, U.S. forces may operate at ‘surge capacity,’ meaning that the U.S. can rapidly gear up personnel and carry out a specific mission for

¹²⁴ Calaguas, “Military Privatization: Efficiency or Anarchy?”.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 64.

which private contractors have been trained.”¹²⁶ One analyst used the example of using contractors to provide security to top officials instead of Navy SEALs, because “there’s better jobs for Navy SEALs to do.”¹²⁷

Political reasons for using PMCs have often been to help governments operate under the radar in certain sensitive areas. “An often-overlooked reason for employing private contractors is that this strategy allows the U.S. government to provide unofficial aid to certain groups in circumstances where the U.S. may fear attracting controversy or violating standards of neutrality.”¹²⁸ However, this political motive is often criticized as it undermines transparency and leaves the door open for abuse. The use of contractors in conflict situations can benefit a government and its military through savings, specializations, freeing up needed forces and allowing a government to work under the radar.¹²⁹

iv. Risks of Using PMCs

Many academics have argued that the benefits of using PMCs far outweigh the risks they pose. The main concerns tend to be about abuses committed by contractors, a lack of law surrounding PMCs’ actions in conflict, and the dangers of becoming reliant on PMCs.¹³⁰ The abuses committed by contractors of the PMC Blackwater are probably the most well known in popular culture as the media coverage was immense. However, other such cases of abuse have been recorded, including the role of contractors in the Abu

¹²⁶ Ibid., 67.

¹²⁷ Calaguas, “Military Privatization: Efficiency or Anarchy?”.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 68.

¹²⁹ Calaguas, “Military Privatization: Efficiency or Anarchy?”.

¹³⁰ *From Mercenaries to Market*; Alexandra, Caparini, and Baker, *Private military and security companies*; Carmola, *Private security contractors and new wars*.

Ghraib prisoner scandal.¹³¹ Many are concerned that the lack of retribution for past abuses might set a precedent for further abuse to be accepted.¹³² This worry often stems from the fact that contractors fall in a grey zone of law. Since they are not part of the military they are not subject to certain laws and oversights. “The prospect of unaccountable private military contractors is disturbing, but also inconsistent with growing demands for compliance with human rights globally.”¹³³ As Chesterman and Lehnardt discussed, states are in theory under an obligation to ensure that private contractors working for them follow the humanitarian laws laid out in the Geneva Conventions, but in practice this rarely happens.¹³⁴ An example of contractors receiving special treatment under the law was seen in Iraq, where for the first few years following the U.S. invasion, contractors were not held accountable under military law and also received immunity from being prosecuted by local laws. This led to a number of alleged abuses by contractors.¹³⁵ These laws have since changed, yet many still claim unaccountability for contractor crimes.¹³⁶

The lack of accountability is not the only risk that comes with the use of PMCs. There is a fear that governments will become too reliant on contractors and this will negatively affect national security. Salzman summed up this sentiment when he wrote, “This growth of private military industry has effectively broken the state’s monopoly

¹³¹ Minow, “Outsourcing Power: How Privatizing Military Efforts Challenges Accountability, Professionalism, and Democracy.”

¹³² Salzman, “Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation.”

¹³³ Minow, “Outsourcing Power: How Privatizing Military Efforts Challenges Accountability, Professionalism, and Democracy,” 995.

¹³⁴ *From Mercenaries to Market*.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*.

¹³⁶ Anna Mulrine, “Military Contractors Gone Wild.,” *U.S. News Digital Weekly* 2, no. 8 (February 26, 2010): 6.

over the use of force, leading to potentially huge consequences both for our understanding of warfare generally and for our understanding of the role of the state in making (and ending) wars.”¹³⁷ Salzman and Martha Minow shared a fear of reliance on PMCs because they believed that this may lead to a marginalization of state authority over war.¹³⁸ Jeremy Scahill went as far as to claim that Blackwater has been allowed to abuse its power to the point of becoming a mercenary force that too often oversteps its boundaries.¹³⁹ This fear of over reliance partly comes from a ‘skill drain’ of armed forces around the world as they leave military services and go to PMCs. “Another serious concern regarding the use of private military contractors is that contractors siphon off talent to the detriment of an already-strained uniformed service.”¹⁴⁰ The increase in PMCs since the end of the cold war has unnerved many due to the risks of accountability, lack of law and a possible over reliance on contractors.

v. Perceptions of PMCs

While many academics and governments have weighed the advantages and disadvantages of using PMC contractors in conflicts, very little research has focused on how contractors view their own role and how the service members in the military perceive contractors. One study by Schaub and Franke surveyed U.S. military officers as well as current U.S. police officers who had previously held positions as military

¹³⁷ Salzman, “Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation,” 860.

¹³⁸ Salzman, “Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation”; Minow, “Outsourcing Power: How Privatizing Military Efforts Challenges Accountability, Professionalism, and Democracy.”

¹³⁹ Scahill, *Blackwater*.

¹⁴⁰ Calaguas, “Military Privatization: Efficiency or Anarchy?,” 70.

contractors.¹⁴¹ They focused on the contractors' reasons for joining PMCs as well as contractor and officer views on the proper roles for PMC contractors. They found that the top two motivators for police officers who took contracts with PMCs were to "face and meet new challenges" and "to help others".¹⁴² Over 60% also thought it was important to serve their country and also to make more money than in their previous jobs. This goes against a wide held assumption that contractors are only in the business for the money. While money played an important role, contractors did not see it as the most important motivator. The study also found a wide discrepancy over what military officers found to be appropriate functions for contractors and what contractors saw as appropriate functions. For example, only 8.8% of military officers agreed with the statement, "There are no functions performed by military personnel that, in principle cannot be performed by a civilian contractor"¹⁴³ while 27.4% of former contractors agreed. The largest discrepancies were in the use of civilian contractors for direct combat, as 46% of contractors found this appropriate and only 15% of officers did. As governments debate over the proper functions of PMC contractors, contractors and military personnel are making up their own minds on the matter.

Another study by Kelty studied the effect that civilian contractors have had on soldiers' unit cohesion and retention attitudes.¹⁴⁴ Kelty found that soldiers working in close proximity with contractors often compared themselves to the contractors and this social comparison negatively affected group moral, mainly due to observations of

¹⁴¹ Schaub and Franke, "Contractors as Military Professionals?"

¹⁴² Ibid., 96.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 98.

¹⁴⁴ Kelty, "Citizen Soldiers and Civilian Contractors."

contractors working less hours and getting paid far higher wages. “Pay is a central focus of inequality, but other issues include how long and how hard one works, commitment to the mission, flexibility in work arrangements, benefits, rank/seniority issues within the ‘total force,’ and whether or not one has to conform to military discipline tradition.”¹⁴⁵ While soldiers often had positive encounters with contractors, their presence had a serious impact on group moral. These two studies which demonstrate views held by contractors and about contractors are just the tip of the iceberg and more studies are needed on this issue.

C. Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

In 1957 Leon Festinger developed the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance which contains two main hypothesis; first that “The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance” and second that “When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance.”¹⁴⁶ The uncomfortable feeling that comes with dissonance is not uncommon and Festinger explained that every individual experiences this phenomena. This theory stemmed from Festinger’s research in 1954 when he and two colleagues infiltrated a cult that had prophesized the end of the world.¹⁴⁷ The cult was originally closed, not allowing in outsiders for visits or interviews. However, after the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 144.

¹⁴⁶ Festinger, *A theory of cognitive dissonance*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails*.

world did not end as they predicted they began to proselytize their views. Festinger used the reactions of the cult members to further explore how individuals cope with failure.

Over time he expanded on cognitive dissonance theory. He, and others, began to demonstrate that cognitive dissonance is very common and everyone tends to modify their views to rid themselves of it. In 1962 Festinger led an experiment to demonstrate how widespread cognitive dissonance really is. His experiment showed that when individuals have to choose between two options which are very similar they often justify their choice afterward so that they will feel as if they chose for a reason. This effect is exaggerated when the decision made is an important one.¹⁴⁸ For example, undecided voters have much more favorable opinions about the politicians they have voted for after their vote has been placed.¹⁴⁹ When deciding between multiple jobs individuals often go through a period of cognitive dissonance as each job has pros and cons. Yet once one selects a job they tend to see all the positive features of the job they took and the negative features of the job they passed on, therefore lessening cognitive dissonance.¹⁵⁰ Feelings of dissonance can also apply to salary. When individuals believe that they are overpaid for what they are doing they feel uncomfortable and therefore attempt to produce more so as to lower their feelings of dissonance.¹⁵¹

While there have been a plethora of studies that have provided proof of cognitive dissonance there has unfortunately been few studies that have applied the theory to the

¹⁴⁸ Festinger, "Cognitive Dissonance."

¹⁴⁹ Oded J. Frenkel and Anthony N. Doob, "Post-decision dissonance at the polling booth.," *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement* 8, no. 4 (1976): 347-350.

¹⁵⁰ Don H. Hockenbury and Sandra E. Hockenbury, *Discovering Psychology, Second Edition*, 2nd ed. (W H Freeman & Co (Sd), 2001).

¹⁵¹ J. Stacy Adams and William B. Rosenbaum, "The relationship of worker productivity to cognitive dissonance about wage inequities.," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 46, no. 3 (1962): 161-164.

military. However, in 2009 Ann Buckmaster and Kenneth McKenzie studied the attitudes that Irish students held about the US invasion in Iraq. They found that initially students held negative views towards the invasion. However, when they were pushed to reveal that this view contradicted other views they held, the students began to reverse their initial standing and began to hold more positive views of the invasion.¹⁵² Ewart Smith also discovered in 1961 that the close knit army culture that exists allows for easy manipulations of attitude changes through cognitive dissonance. This was proven through a simple experiment of food preference.¹⁵³ While the fact that Smith was easily able to manipulate army members' food preference may seem insignificant it points to a larger phenomena at the ease to which the collective attitudes of the army can be manipulated.¹⁵⁴

Perhaps one of the most provocative claims of cognitive dissonance effect in war was the claim by The New Republic newspaper that former President George W. Bush and his administration had shown signs of cognitive dissonance during the Iraq War.¹⁵⁵ They argued that Bush and his administration played down gruesome details of combat and disturbing news, such as that of Abu Ghraib, to lessen their feelings of dissonance caused by their decision to go to war.¹⁵⁶ While this claim is provocative and possibly disputable, it is easy to see how soldiers and politicians alike can use cognitive dissonance to deal with the decisions that they have made.

¹⁵² Buckmaster and McKenzie, "Cognitive Dissonance and Students' Opinions on the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq."

¹⁵³ Ewart E. Smith, "The Power of Dissonance Techniques to Change Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (December 21, 1961): 626 -639.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ "Dissonance."

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 3: Methods

As stated before, there are many studies that have focused on the lack of laws surrounding PMC contractors in conflict zones and the possible national security dangers of contractors but few have looked at who these contractors really are, this research aims to fill some of the existing gaps. To answer the research questions this study used a qualitative flexible design that is open and flexible to change. The research had to be able to evolve as research from interviews, newspapers and articles were gathered. A triangulation of data was used through three different sources: semi-structured interviews, archival/data analysis and a media content analysis.

Twelve former and current Private Military Company contractors were interviewed using a semi-structured interview method. The first three current and former PMC contractors that were interviewed were initially referred to the researcher by colleagues or associates and a snowballing process (whereby former contractors referred the researcher to other former contractors) was used to contact the rest. Approval for the interviews was given by the George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board. Due to the nature of the field many current contractors were suspicious or uncomfortable with the idea of participating; therefore the study had to rely heavily on former contractors. Anyone who was uncomfortable with the idea of participating did not take part in an interview. However, there were a few current contractors who had no issue with participating as their contract had no stipulations against it.

The archival and data analysis focused on a review of information available on contractors. Even though a lot of information exists about PMC contractors it is not well organized and is spread out over multiple fields. Information such as numbers of PMC contractors, salaries, locations, and contractor demographics were looked at. Recent U.S. governmental reports on contractors were relied on heavily for this section, but independent studies published in peer reviewed journals were also used. This information is compared and contrasted with existing theories of identity and nationality in the discussion section.

Finally, the media content analysis focused on the mass media's reporting of contractors. Since there is a plethora of information in the media on PMC contractors this aspect of the research was done using a case study approach, focusing on the Private Military Company Blackwater. Furthermore, this aspect of the study focused specifically on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Major news publications were analyzed from 2004 (when four Blackwater guards were killed in Iraq, making the company infamous) until present. The triangulation of methods through semi-structured interviews, archival/data analysis and a media content analysis fit in very nicely with the qualitative flexible design that allowed for adjustment as the research progressed.

A. Methodology

As explained above, the methodology used for this research focused on a qualitative flexible design and also incorporated a case study portion for the media content analysis. The reasons for using a qualitative flexible design over a fixed qualitative design is due to the nature of the research and interview questions being open

ended and evolving as the research proceeded. As Robson explains, “To follow the fixed design route, you have to be in the position of knowing what you are looking for. However, those following flexible designs begin much more generally.”¹⁵⁷ Since the outcomes and complete direction of the research continued to develop as the data were gathered through interviews and archival analysis, the methodology had to accommodate this by adjusting throughout the study. While starting with a general concept, the research narrowed in focus as data was collected. This followed the general pattern of flexible design since “a flexible design evolves during data collection.”¹⁵⁸ For example, it was unclear and unknown before the study began what the demographics of the contractors would be and what they would say. It would have been impossible to have a rigid, fixed design because of the unknown of what themes would emerge along the way. The research design was also qualitative because it dealt with content that is hard to analyze with a more rigid, often numerical based, quantitative approach. Flexible and qualitative designs often go together as the nature of qualitative designs call for adaptability.¹⁵⁹ This allowed for the data to drive the research as it was gathered through interviews and archival research instead of a predetermined fixed design.

A small component of the research methodology focused on a case study approach, while still adhering to a qualitative flexible design. A case study is the “development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a single ‘case’, or of a small

¹⁵⁷ Colin Robson, *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 46.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁵⁹ Robson, *Real world research*.

number or related ‘cases’.”¹⁶⁰ Since there is a plethora of information on Private Military Company contractors spread out across multiple fields it was determined that a focused case study would better serve the media content analysis and the archival/data analysis over a comprehensive analysis which would be far too cumbersome provided the limited time and resources of the study. The media content analysis case study focused on the Private Military Company Blackwater (which recently changed names to Xe). This in depth analysis of the case of Blackwater allowed the researcher to discover how individual contractors have acted on the job as well as gain insight into how contractors are viewed by outsiders, namely the media. The archival/data analysis focused on a case study of the use of contractors in U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

B. Methods & Data Collection

It is essential to use more than one method for gathering data and “the use of multiple sources enhance the rigor of the research.”¹⁶¹ This study used three main research areas to strengthen the findings, analyses and results through data triangulation. Through the frame of a qualitative flexible methodology, the methods employed to carry out the research were semi-structured interviews, archival/data analysis, and a media content analysis.

Interviews were essential for the research as it is imperative to find out what contractors believe and how they view themselves. As a result, this area was the most cumbersome and significant area of the study. Semi-structured interviews have “predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer’s

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 174.

perceptions of what seems most appropriate.”¹⁶² The semi-structured interviews were used to discuss issues of nationality, patriotism and loyalty while interviewing former and current contractors. Fifteen to twenty five PMC contractors were sought out through the researcher’s contacts. However, only twelve were obtained. The researcher used a personal network of former U.S. Marines to obtain contact information of current and former PMC contractors. Using three initial entry points to get in contact with contractors, a process of referral was used to obtain contact with all other participants. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder either via Skype, over the phone, or in one case, in person. Furthermore the interviewer took extensive hand written notes during the interview in the off chance that the recorder did not work. As Robson emphasizes, “Notes should be made during the interview, even if it is also being taped.”¹⁶³ Each interview ranged in length from thirteen minutes to one hour and four minutes. After each interview the recordings were transcribed into word documents and analyzed for emerging themes and trends.

Another form of analysis used was the archival/data analysis. Here the focus was on archival and data information concentrating on statistics of PMCs such as the numbers of PMC contractors, salaries, locations, and contractor demographics. A case study here focused on the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is because contractor data are simply not available in many cases, and while the U.S. reports on their use of contractors is not completely reliable, it is the largest and most comprehensive data available. This information was used to analyze possible trends and similarities between contractors.

¹⁶² Ibid., 270.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 278.

Research articles obtained on JSTOR, government archives as well as other sources made available through the George Mason University library were used to collect the data. As will be shown in the results section, this area became the hardest to research as contractor information is not readily available from many sources.

There was also a media content analysis in the form of a case study focused on the media's portrayal of the PMC Blackwater during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Thirty articles were taken at random from major world news publications. The articles were obtained through a random search of the keyword "Blackwater" in the LexisNexis Academic database with the perimeter set for "Major World Publications." Newspaper articles were selected at random from the years 2004 to 2011. The sources included U.S. and international newspapers. The U.S. based newspapers were the Washington Post, New York Times, International Herald Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, Washington Times, and Los Angeles Times. Twenty-two of the articles were from U.S. publications. The other eight came from the international newspapers The Gazette (Montreal Québec), Guardian, Australian, Scotsman, Toronto Star, Sydney Morning Herald and Independent. The amount of articles varied per year with four in 2004, two from 2005, one from 2006, ten from 2007, two from 2008, three from 2009, four from 2010, and four from 2011. The year 2004 was chosen because it was the year Blackwater made headlines when four of its employees were killed in Iraq. Articles as recent as this year were used since Blackwater (which changed its name to Xe in 2009 because of controversy¹⁶⁴) still remains a hot topic in the debate on the use of PMC contractors. The three methods

¹⁶⁴ The Associated Press, "Blackwater Changes Its Name to Xe," *The New York Times*, February 14, 2009, sec. US, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/14/us/14blackwater.html>.

employed in this study (semi-structured interviews, archival/data analysis and a media content analysis) were used to analyze and discover trends between contractors, their views of themselves and their role in conflicts. A more detailed explanation of how the information was analyzed can be found in the next section.

C. Data Analysis Methods

The three pronged approach to data collection through interviews, archival/data analysis, and a media content analysis was used to be able to answer the research questions with knowledge from multiple sources. A mix of a template approach and editing approach were used in all three areas for analysis. In a template approach codes are given based on the research questions and are put into categories. They are “typified by matrix analysis, where descriptive summaries of the text segments are supplemented by matrices, network maps, flow charts and diagrams.”¹⁶⁵ Due to time limits and constraints in money, not allowing for the purchase of data analysis computer programs, this study had to blend the template approach with the editing approach. The editing approach, like the template approach, codes data but is more interpretive and flexible, relying “on the researcher’s interpretation of the meaning or patterns in the texts.”¹⁶⁶ The blending of both the template approach and the editing approach varied by what aspect of the research was being analyzed.

The twelve interviews were analyzed comprehensively through an approach that relied heavily on the editing method in which codes were based on meanings and patterns found in the text. This editing method analysis followed an approach laid out by Miles

¹⁶⁵ Robson, *Real world research*, 458.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

and Huberman in “a fairly classic set of analytic moves arranged in sequence.”¹⁶⁷ Each question was first analyzed individually and coded based on responses. ‘Memos’ were written on each interview transcript which conveyed comments, thoughts, reflections, and themes. Once all of the interview transcripts were individually coded and analyzed, they were looked at for emerging patterns and themes. This led to connections made between the interviews, inference of trends and the creation of groups and sub-groups of answers to the interview. Once the interviews were compared with each other the researcher was able to make generalizations and conclusions. These are conveyed in both the results and discussion chapters.

During the analysis of the archival and data information that was gathered a major problem was encountered. Since the information was mostly statistical a template approach mixed with a quasi-statistical approach was used to find patterns and information. A quasi-statistical approach uses the frequencies of information given in a text to determine its importance and relevance.¹⁶⁸ However, the information gathered in the archival and data analysis came mostly from only a few governments’ documents and reports because no other reliable sources were found. Another issue was that this information was not 100% reliable, even by the government’s own admittance.¹⁶⁹ This will be discussed further in the results section. However, even with the short comings of

¹⁶⁷ Matthew B. Miles and A. M. Huberman, *Qualitative data analysis* (SAGE, 1999), 9.

¹⁶⁸ Robson, *Real world research*.

¹⁶⁹ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*, August 31, 2011, https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://wartimecontracting.gov/docs/CWC_FinalReport-lowres.pdf&embedded=true&chrome=true&pli=1; Moshe Schwartz and Joyprada Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*, CRS Report for Congress, May 13, 2011.

the data gathered, it was still analyzed using the mixed quasi-statistical and template approaches.

The media content analysis, like the interviews, used an approach that was relied heavily on the editing approach but mixed in the template approach as well. Here codes were assigned to the headlines as well as the texts of all the thirty articles that were gathered. The same step by step approach given by Miles and Huberman was used in the media content analysis where codes were given, memos were written about each article, patterns and themes were deciphered, generalizations were made and finally conclusions were drawn.¹⁷⁰ Codes were assigned to each article for statements that were found to be positive or sympathetic towards contractors, statements that were found to be negative towards contractors, statements made about nationality (and if they were positive or negative), and quotes given directly by contractors (and if they were negative or positive). The articles were also individually rated as overall positive, negative or neutral to contractors. Headlines were also given the codes of being overall positive, negative, or neutral towards contractors. The results of the analyses from each area (interviews, archival/data analysis, and the media content analysis) can be found in Chapter 4 and their implications are discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁷⁰ Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative data analysis*.

Chapter 4: Results

The results of the three sections of this study were numerous. The media content analysis gave insight into how the mass media view contractors. Contractors and PMCs were often portrayed in negative ways by the media. The amount of negativity directed at contractors varied by year and publication, with a difference between U.S. based newspapers and international newspapers. Topics of nationality were largely absent in the newspapers but when the issue was mentioned there was a mix of positive and negative nationalistic perceptions. The demographic section was largely based on two recent U.S. governmental reports as other data was either outdated or nonexistent. The main trends found were that contractor use has been on the rise since the beginning of the U.S. wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) and continue to grow along with the costs. However, even with the governmental reports the data surrounding contractor demographics is murky and debated. The interview analysis provided the most data and information of the three methods. Many themes emerged in the interviews and certain topics were brought up by all participants. Overall the contractors were found to be very patriotic and often justified their profession. A comprehensive analysis of the results for the media content analysis, archival/data analysis and interviews are given below.

A. How the Media Views Contractors

The media's portrayal of PMC contractors has great implications on how the public views PMC contractors which can affect contractor moral. After analyzing thirty

articles published by major world newspapers on the PMC Blackwater from 2004-2011 it was obvious that the general view of contractors was a negative one. Overall, the negative sentiment grew stronger through the years and was expressed more strongly by international publications than U.S. ones. Contractors were given little to no voice in the articles and the contractors were often not differentiated from the companies they worked for; if the company had done something wrong so had they. Finally, the issues of nationality were rarely discussed; however, the few times that it was discussed provided important insight into how people view contractors. The multiple findings of the media content analysis on Blackwater from 2004-2011 are discussed in further detail below.

There was a noticeable shift in the positive and negative perceptions of Blackwater from 2004 to 2011. In addition, there were apparent themes that emerged year to year. Of the four articles examined in 2004, one was very neutral with some positive input in respect to their portrayals of contractors,¹⁷¹ two were split between positive and negative comments,¹⁷² and only one was mostly negative.¹⁷³ 2004 was the year that four Blackwater guards were killed “in the central Iraqi city of Fallujah, their bodies mutilated and dragged through the streets by chanting crowds.”¹⁷⁴ In the immediate aftermath of these deaths there were articles that offered explanations of Blackwater as a company that aided the efforts of the Iraq War and sympathy for the

¹⁷¹ James Dao and Eric Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 2004, sec. A.

¹⁷² Dana Priest, “Private Guards Repel Attack on U.S. Headquarters,” *The Washington Post*, April 6, 2004, sec. A; Barry Yeoman, “Need an Army? Just Pick Up the Phone,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 2004, sec. A.

¹⁷³ David Barstow, “Civilians hired as private guards in Iraq fight alongside U.S. military: Mercenaries drawn into firefights,” *The Gazette (Montreal, Quebec)*, April 12, 2004, sec. News.

¹⁷⁴ Dao and Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price,” 1.

families of those who were killed.¹⁷⁵ One article even commented on the heroics of an attack on U.S. Headquarters that was repelled by Blackwater contractors, “With their ammunition nearly gone, a wounded and badly bleeding Marine on the rooftop, and no reinforcement by the U.S. military in the immediate offing, the company sent in helicopters to drop ammunition and pick up the Marine.”¹⁷⁶ While the debate of what the role of contractors should be was touched on in the article, it was the only article to praise the decision of Blackwater to send in their helicopter. Later articles would mention this event only in relation to the question on what the proper role of contractors should be; should they be able to fight at all, or should that be left to the military?

The sympathy given to Blackwater in the aftermath of the contractors deaths began to diminish in 2005 and 2006 as many began to question the motivations of Blackwater. Of the three articles analyzed in 2005 and 2006, one portrayed Blackwater contractors in a positive light¹⁷⁷ and two in a negative light.¹⁷⁸ The struggle for the media to determine the motivations behind Blackwater was seen in statements such as, “They’re driven by money and lust for a life on the edge, but also by a self-styled altruism.”¹⁷⁹ Another article discussed the need for stricter regulation but then just a few lines later claimed that “The firm is understood to have disciplined and well-trained recruits.”¹⁸⁰ It

¹⁷⁵ Dao and Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price”; Yeoman, “Need an Army? Just Pick Up the Phone.”

¹⁷⁶ Priest, “Private Guards Repel Attack on U.S. Headquarters,” A01.

¹⁷⁷ “Private Security Workers Living On Edge in Iraq; Downing of Helicopter Shows Heightened Risks,” *The Washington Post*, April 23, 2005, sec. A.

¹⁷⁸ Mark Townsend, “The World: Fury at security firm’s ‘shoot for fun’ memo,” *The Observer*, April 3, 2005, sec. Observer News Pages; Jeannette Catsoulis, “Iraq for Sale -- The War Profiteers,” *The New York Times*, September 8, 2006, sec. E.

¹⁷⁹ “Private Security Workers Living On Edge in Iraq; Downing of Helicopter Shows Heightened Risks,” A01.

¹⁸⁰ Townsend, “The World: Fury at security firm’s ‘shoot for fun’ memo,” 18.

was apparent that while in 2005 and 2006 there were reservations about the undefined gray zone that Blackwater contractor fell into (not falling into the category of civilian nor military); there were still valid arguments to be made for the firm's use.

This changed rapidly in 2007. Blackwater became plagued by controversy and scandal, including an incident in 2005 when Blackwater guards shot at a car until it caught fire with Iraqi civilians in it when they would not pull over and a 2006 incident where a Blackwater guard was accused of being drunk when he shot and killed one of Iraq's Vice President's security guards.¹⁸¹ However nothing caused as much of an uproar than the September 16, 2007 shootings in Baghdad's Nisour Square in which 17 Iraqis were killed and at least 18 injured.¹⁸² Two of the 2007 articles analyzed were written before this incident occurred but both held negative views of Blackwater.¹⁸³ However, it is important to note that one of these articles portrayed the corporation in a negative light while showing sympathy for Blackwater contractors who were killed in Iraq.¹⁸⁴ There were eight articles published in 2007 after the Nisour Square shooting that were analyzed for the study. This was the largest concentration of articles in any year from 2004-2011. This is believed to have happened because the shooting at Nisour Square prompted the highest concentration of articles published about Blackwater and the random search for articles turned up a majority from 2007. Of the eight articles five conveyed very negative

¹⁸¹ David Isenberg, *Shadow force: private security contractors in Iraq* (ABC-CLIO, 2008).

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ S.A. Miller, "Iraq contractor focus of hearing; Victims' kin cite 'profiteering' by Blackwater USA," *The Washington Times*, February 8, 2007, sec. Nation; Jeremy Scahill, "Bush's mercenaries thrive in Iraq; President relies on thousands of private soldiers with little oversight, a troubling example of outsourcing of U.S. military, writes Jeremy Scahill," *The Toronto Star*, January 29, 2007, sec. Opinion.

¹⁸⁴ Miller, "Iraq contractor focus of hearing; Victims' kin cite 'profiteering' by Blackwater USA."

views of Blackwater,¹⁸⁵ two were mostly negative but did write some on the need for and positive aspects of contractors,¹⁸⁶ and one article was neutral.¹⁸⁷ The neutral article did provide some negative reactions to Blackwater such as a former contractor who, “stopped working for Blackwater last year because, he said, he was uncomfortable with what he termed some executives’ cowboy mentalities.”¹⁸⁸ However, it also was the only article that focused on Blackwater contractors’ own statements on the issues and their explanations of misinformation about what they do, leading to a bad reputation.¹⁸⁹

After the media’s negative outlook of Blackwater and the dangers of PMCs following the 2007 shooting, the media’s perceptions began to change in 2008 and 2009. While the articles were noticeably more negative than the articles from 2004-2006, they were also noticeably more positive than the articles published in 2007. Of the five articles published in 2008 and 2009 only one was completely negative.¹⁹⁰ One was mostly negative as it focused on the 2007 shootings but did state that, “previous audits conducted on Blackwater showed that the company had an overall ‘good’ performance apart from

¹⁸⁵ Tom Baldwin, “Security firm boss defends Iraq role,” *The Australian*, October 4, 2007, sec. World; “Waxman: Blackwater May Owe Back Taxes”, October 23, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/22/AR2007102202169.html>; Joshua Partlow and Sudarsan Raghavan, “Iraq Probe of U.S. Security Firm Grows; Blackwater, Accused of Killing 11 on Sunday, Cited in Earlier Deaths,” *The Washington Post*, September 22, 2007, sec. A; George Kerevan, “Focus: Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world Mercenary armies are providing us with a modern-day dystopia, and it’s scary,” *The Scotsman*, October 15, 2007; Glenn Kessler and Karen DeYoung, “Blackwater Focused on Cost, Not Safety, Report Says,” *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2007, sec. Foreign.

¹⁸⁶ Alissa J. Rubin and Andrew E. Kramer, “Iraqi Premier Says Blackwater Shootings Challenge His Nation’s Sovereignty,” *The New York Times*, September 24, 2007, sec. A; Anne Davies, “One Blackwater guard yelled ‘No, no, no’,” *Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)*, October 6, 2006, sec. News and Features.

¹⁸⁷ John M. Broder and James Risen, “Besieged on all sides, Blackwater fights back,” *The International Herald Tribune*, November 2, 2007, sec. News.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸⁹ Broder and Risen, “Besieged on all sides, Blackwater fights back.”

¹⁹⁰ Scott Shane, “Iraq May Ban Blackwater, Report Says,” *The New York Times*, December 18, 2008, sec. Foreign Desk.

the incident in Baghdad's Nusoor Square."¹⁹¹ The remaining three articles all had a mix of negative and positive statements on Blackwater and were found to be neutral.¹⁹² These neutral articles focus on topics such as Blackwater's name change to Xe¹⁹³ and their contracts with the CIA, which was a critique of the CIA but not Blackwater.¹⁹⁴ This shift back to neutrality almost mirrored articles in 2005 and 2006 where arguments for and against the use of PMC were laid out and debated.

In 2010 the attempted prosecution of the Blackwater contractors led to a resurgence of negative attitudes towards the use of PMCs and contractors. Four articles were taken from 2010. All articles discussed the negative perceptions of Blackwater's contractors caused by the 2007 shootings.¹⁹⁵ This was the main theme in three of the articles that portrayed Blackwater negatively.¹⁹⁶ They all discussed the difficulties of

¹⁹¹ Sara A. Carter, "Blackwater under review in Afghanistan; Iraq ousts contractor," *The Washington Times*, February 3, 2009, A01.

¹⁹² The Associated Press, "Blackwater Changes Its Name to Xe," *The New York Times*, February 14, 2009, sec. US, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/14/us/14blackwater.html>; James Risen and Mark Mazzetti, "Contractors said to load bombs for C.I.A. planes; Blackwater's role shows degree to which agency depends on outsiders," *The International Herald Tribune*, August 22, 2009; Bernd Debusmann, "Success for Blackwater? Depends who you ask; Letter from Washington," *The International Herald Tribune*, April 11, 2008, sec. News.

¹⁹³ The Associated Press, "Blackwater Changes Its Name to Xe."

¹⁹⁴ Risen and Mazzetti, "Contractors said to load bombs for C.I.A. planes; Blackwater's role shows degree to which agency depends on outsiders."

¹⁹⁵ Jane Arraf, "Blackwater security contractors ordered out of Iraq; Iraq has ordered more than 200 current and former employees of the private security company Blackwater, who still play a role in guarding US diplomats, to leave the country within the next four days.," February 10, 2010; James Risen, "Blackwater Founder Moves To Abu Dhabi, Records Say," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2010, sec. A; James Risen, "U.S. strains to pull off Blackwater prosecutions; Questions of jurisdiction, evidence and immunity are hampering efforts," *The International Herald Tribune*, October 22, 2010, sec. News; Carol Huang, "When things go boom in the night, Pakistanis blame Blackwater;The US says it doesn't work with the security firm Blackwater in Pakistan, and the Pakistani government insists no Blackwater employees are working in the country. But many Pakistanis doubt those assertions, complicating US efforts to build trust.," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 19, 2010.

¹⁹⁶ Arraf, "Blackwater security contractors ordered out of Iraq; Iraq has ordered more than 200 current and former employees of the private security company Blackwater, who still play a role in guarding US diplomats, to leave the country within the next four days.,"; Risen, "Blackwater Founder Moves To Abu

prosecuting the Blackwater contractors who were responsible for the murders. “The difficulty of these cases also illustrates tricky legal questions raised by the government’s increasing use of private military contractors in war zones.”¹⁹⁷ One article was found to be neutral in its portrayal of Blackwater contractors but talked about how Blackwater controversies have led to Pakistani distrust of the U.S.¹⁹⁸

Four articles were taken from 2011 and analyzed. One article that was found to be negative discussed the continuing controversy of the prosecution of the Blackwater contractors responsible for the 2007 Baghdad shootings.¹⁹⁹ Another article was also negative, discussing controversies of unqualified contractors and fraud committed by Blackwater for overcharging for its services.²⁰⁰ The last two articles from 2011 were mainly neutral in nature, although they both brought up past Blackwater controversies.²⁰¹ The analysis of Blackwater articles from year to year shows negative perceptions throughout, but the height of negativity was in 2007 when the largest Blackwater controversy took place.

Dhabi, Records Say”; Risen, “U.S. strains to pull off Blackwater prosecutions; Questions of jurisdiction, evidence and immunity are hampering efforts.”

¹⁹⁷ Risen, “U.S. strains to pull off Blackwater prosecutions; Questions of jurisdiction, evidence and immunity are hampering efforts,” 5.

¹⁹⁸ Huang, “When things go boom in the night, Pakistanis blame Blackwater;The US says it doesn’t work with the security firm Blackwater in Pakistan, and the Pakistani government insists no Blackwater employees are working in the country. But many Pakistanis doubt those assertions, complicating US efforts to build trust.”

¹⁹⁹ Richard Serrano, “Charges revived against guards in Blackwater case; A U.S. appeals court reverses an earlier ruling about the 2007 incident in Iraq, which left 14 civilians dead.,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 2011, sec. Main News,National Desk.

²⁰⁰ Matthew Barakat, “Blackwater accused of fraud by employees,” *The Independent*, July 16, 2011.

²⁰¹ Ray Rivera, Sharifullah Sahak, and Alissa Rubin, “Deadly Attack by Taliban in Kabul Sought to Kill Head of Blackwater,” *The New York Times*, January 29, 2011, sec. World / Asia Pacific, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/29/world/asia/29afghan.html>; Kim Sengupta, “Blackwater founder ‘setting up mercenary army for UAE,” *The Independent (London)*, May 16, 2011, sec. World.

Another trend found in the analysis of the media articles was that international publications tended to be harsher in their criticism of Blackwater and PMCs than U.S. publications. Of the thirty articles analyzed, only eight were from international news organizations that are not based in the U.S.²⁰² Of these articles, seven held very negative portrayals of Blackwater.²⁰³ Only one article was found to be mostly neutral and discussed Blackwater setting up an army in the United Arab Emirates.²⁰⁴ While many of the U.S. based articles portrayed Blackwater negatively it was not so one sided. Only one non-U.S. based article was found to have some positive statements about Blackwater.²⁰⁵ Conversely, five of the twenty two U.S. based newspapers had at least some positive statements about Blackwater and a few were even mostly positive.²⁰⁶ While both U.S. and non-U.S. publications had overwhelmingly negative views of Blackwater contractors, non-U.S. sources used stronger negative language to describe the firm and its workers.

²⁰² Barakat, "Blackwater accused of fraud by employees"; Sengupta, "Blackwater founder 'setting up mercenary army for UAE"; Davies, "One Blackwater guard yelled 'No, no, no'"; Kerevan, "Focus: Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world Mercenary armies are providing us with a modern-day dystopia, and it's scary"; Baldwin, "Security firm boss defends Iraq role"; Scahill, "Bush's mercenaries thrive in Iraq; President relies on thousands of private soldiers with little oversight, a troubling example of outsourcing of U.S. military, writes Jeremy Scahill"; Townsend, "The World: Fury at security firm's 'shoot for fun' memo"; Barstow, "Civilians hired as private guards in Iraq fight alongside U.S. military: Mercenaries drawn into firefights."

²⁰³ Townsend, "The World: Fury at security firm's 'shoot for fun' memo"; Scahill, "Bush's mercenaries thrive in Iraq; President relies on thousands of private soldiers with little oversight, a troubling example of outsourcing of U.S. military, writes Jeremy Scahill"; Baldwin, "Security firm boss defends Iraq role"; Kerevan, "Focus: Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world Mercenary armies are providing us with a modern-day dystopia, and it's scary"; Davies, "One Blackwater guard yelled 'No, no, no'"; Barstow, "Civilians hired as private guards in Iraq fight alongside U.S. military: Mercenaries drawn into firefights"; Barakat, "Blackwater accused of fraud by employees."

²⁰⁴ Sengupta, "Blackwater founder 'setting up mercenary army for UAE."

²⁰⁵ Davies, "One Blackwater guard yelled 'No, no, no'."

²⁰⁶ Debusmann, "Success for Blackwater? Depends who you ask; Letter from Washington"; Priest, "Private Guards Repel Attack on U.S. Headquarters"; Dao and Schmitt, "Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price"; Yeoman, "Need an Army? Just Pick Up the Phone"; "Private Security Workers Living On Edge in Iraq; Downing of Helicopter Shows Heightened Risks."

For example, five of the non-U.S. articles used the term ‘mercenaries’²⁰⁷ to describe Blackwater contractors yet only one U.S. publication did.²⁰⁸ One journalist wrote, “The head of a private security firm accused of employing rogue ‘trigger-happy mercenaries’ responsible for a series of civilian deaths in Iraq came out fighting when confronted by his US congressional critics.”²⁰⁹ Another stated, “Blackwater is much more than a bunch of trigger-happy security guards with too much testosterone. The company is the world’s most powerful mercenary army.”²¹⁰ Quotes with similarly strong language against Blackwater contractors can be found throughout the non-U.S. publications analyzed, although some U.S. publications also offered strong criticism.

While the positive or negative connotations of headlines could often predict the positive or negative outlook of the articles, this was not always the case. It became apparent that sensationalist, attention grabbing headlines were used in some cases. While nearly all the articles had at least a few negative things to say about Blackwater and its contractors, a lot also mixed in positive and neutral statements about the use of contractors. However, seventeen headlines were found to be negative, eleven were neutral and only two positive with respect to Blackwater contractors. Attention grabbing

²⁰⁷ Baldwin, “Security firm boss defends Iraq role”; Sengupta, “Blackwater founder ‘setting up mercenary army for UAE’”; Barstow, “Civilians hired as private guards in Iraq fight alongside U.S. military: Mercenaries drawn into firefights”; Kerevan, “Focus: Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world Mercenary armies are providing us with a modern-day dystopia, and it’s scary”; Scahill, “Bush’s mercenaries thrive in Iraq; President relies on thousands of private soldiers with little oversight, a troubling example of outsourcing of U.S. military, writes Jeremy Scahill.”

²⁰⁸ Rivera, Sahak, and Rubin, “Deadly Attack by Taliban in Kabul Sought to Kill Head of Blackwater.”

²⁰⁹ Baldwin, “Security firm boss defends Iraq role,” 10.

²¹⁰ Kerevan, “Focus: Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world Mercenary armies are providing us with a modern-day dystopia, and it’s scary,” 24.

headlines such as “Fury at security firm’s ‘shoot for fun’ memo,”²¹¹ “Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world: Mercenary armies are providing us with modern-day dystopia, and it’s scary,”²¹² and “Iraqi Premier Says Blackwater Shootings Challenge His Nation’s Sovereignty”²¹³ all shed negative light on Blackwater contractors.

There was also very little attempt to speak with contractors in the articles. While some of this may have been due to non-disclosure statements that Blackwater has some contractors sign, many other groups who often do not give statements were reached out to, including Eric Prince (founder and former owner of Blackwater), Blackwater spokespeople and government officials from the CIA and State Department.²¹⁴ When these individuals were reached out to and did not comment it was mentioned in the articles.²¹⁵ Yet there was no mention of contractors declining to talk in any of the articles. Out of the thirty articles seven contained quotes and information from government and Blackwater executives.²¹⁶ Many of the Blackwater executives talked about the

²¹¹ Townsend, “The World: Fury at security firm’s ‘shoot for fun’ memo.”

²¹² Kerevan, “Focus: Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world Mercenary armies are providing us with a modern-day dystopia, and it’s scary.”

²¹³ Rubin and Kramer, “Iraqi Premier Says Blackwater Shootings Challenge His Nation’s Sovereignty.”

²¹⁴ Broder and Risen, “Besieged on all sides, Blackwater fights back”; Dao and Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price”; Kerevan, “Focus: Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world Mercenary armies are providing us with a modern-day dystopia, and it’s scary”; Barstow, “Civilians hired as private guards in Iraq fight alongside U.S. military: Mercenaries drawn into firefights”; Scahill, “Bush’s mercenaries thrive in Iraq; President relies on thousands of private soldiers with little oversight, a troubling example of outsourcing of U.S. military, writes Jeremy Scahill”; “Waxman”; Debusmann, “Success for Blackwater? Depends who you ask; Letter from Washington.”

²¹⁵ Huang, “When things go boom in the night, Pakistanis blame Blackwater; The US says it doesn’t work with the security firm Blackwater in Pakistan, and the Pakistani government insists no Blackwater employees are working in the country. But many Pakistanis doubt those assertions, complicating US efforts to build trust.”; Risen and Mazzetti, “Contractors said to load bombs for C.I.A. planes; Blackwater’s role shows degree to which agency depends on outsiders.”

²¹⁶ Broder and Risen, “Besieged on all sides, Blackwater fights back”; Dao and Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price”; Kerevan, “Focus: Prince of darkness is the lethal face of a menacing new world Mercenary armies are providing us with a modern-day dystopia, and it’s scary”; Barstow, “Civilians

misconceptions about the firm. After the brutal deaths of four Blackwater contractors in 2004, Blackwater issued a statement saying, “We grieve today for the loss of our colleagues and we pray for their families...we voluntarily work to bring freedom and democracy to the Iraqi people.”²¹⁷ Most of the Blackwater quotes that came from Eric Prince (the founder and previous owner) or official spokespeople were aimed at improving the perceptions of Blackwater. Out of the thirty articles only two had direct quotes from Blackwater contractors themselves.²¹⁸ One article only briefly talks to a former Colombian police officer about Blackwater setting up a force in the United Arab Emirates.²¹⁹ Only one article talks with a Blackwater contractor to find out his motivations for joining.²²⁰ Rich, a retired Navy commando, talked about the benefits of working for Blackwater in Iraq including helping with a mission he believes in, getting back into war action, and the high pay. He also admitted that his role is often “cloudy and controversial.”²²¹ However, it is hard to draw generalizations of these Blackwater contractors since only one article focuses on them.

Contractor identities were often kept hidden and their deaths were not usually referred to as sacrifice for the U.S. This is in stark contrast to military member’s deaths. The 2004 deaths of four Blackwater contractors did elicit sympathy for the families of

hired as private guards in Iraq fight alongside U.S. military: Mercenaries drawn into firefights”; Scahill, “Bush’s mercenaries thrive in Iraq; President relies on thousands of private soldiers with little oversight, a troubling example of outsourcing of U.S. military, writes Jeremy Scahill”; “Waxman”; Debusmann, “Success for Blackwater? Depends who you ask; Letter from Washington.”

²¹⁷ Dao and Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price,” 1.

²¹⁸ “Private Security Workers Living On Edge in Iraq; Downing of Helicopter Shows Heightened Risks”; Sengupta, “Blackwater founder ‘setting up mercenary army for UAE.”

²¹⁹ Sengupta, “Blackwater founder ‘setting up mercenary army for UAE,” 24.

²²⁰ “Private Security Workers Living On Edge in Iraq; Downing of Helicopter Shows Heightened Risks.”

²²¹ Ibid., A01.

those killed by a few articles.²²² Yet the secrecy that Blackwater operates with often leaves contractors deaths unnoticed, and few articles touch on the subject. The horrific way in which the four Blackwater contractors were killed in 2004 did gain a media following unlike any other for contractors. However, “Blackwater declined to identify the dead men.”²²³ In addition to having deaths go unnoticed; contractors were often not credited for their own work. When eight Blackwater contractors defended U.S. headquarters in Iraq, saving one U.S. Marine and two others, U.S. military spokesman Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt held a press conference on the attack “without commenting...on the role of the Blackwater guards.”²²⁴ One article summed up this sentiment by saying, “Private contractors are an invisible but growing part of how war is now fought.”²²⁵ Others talked about how the secrecy of PMCs is used by the government to hide the costs of war, “the United States’ growing use of private military companies hides the financial, personal and political costs of military operations overseas, since the concerns face little public scrutiny.”²²⁶ In the thirty articles examined, the lack of discussion of contractors themselves and the secrecy surrounding them was quite stunning.

There were few statements on nationality and sovereignty and articles that touched on this issue often did so vaguely. However, it is important to note the few articles that did mention or allude to this issue. There were two main points of view when

²²² “Private Security Workers Living On Edge in Iraq; Downing of Helicopter Shows Heightened Risks”; Dao and Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price”; Miller, “Iraq contractor focus of hearing; Victims’ kin cite ‘profiteering’ by Blackwater USA.”

²²³ Dao and Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price,” 1.

²²⁴ Priest, “Private Guards Repel Attack on U.S. Headquarters,” A01.

²²⁵ Yeoman, “Need an Army? Just Pick Up the Phone.”

²²⁶ Dao and Schmitt, “Private Guards Take Big Risks, For Right Price,” 1.

it comes to issues of nationality. First, some articles tried to validate the patriotic role of contractors through discussing the fact that most are former military²²⁷ and how they free up and protect military personnel in war zones.²²⁸ Conversely, others discussed the negative implications of using a corporation instead of the military in such a prominent role in war²²⁹ and the complications it leads to for host countries.²³⁰ The dichotomy seen between those who believe Blackwater contractors are at one with the U.S. missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and those who believe they are at odds with it can be seen in such quotes as, “‘Blackwater professionals most of whom are military veterans voluntarily go in harm’s way at the request, direction and control of the United States government,’ said Andrew Howell, the company’s general counsel.”²³¹ And, “Henry Waxman, the Democratic chairman of the oversight committee, believes Blackwater’s activities...are undermining the ‘hearts and minds’ mission of US troops.”²³² The contradictory statements tend to lean on the side of not connecting Blackwater’s contractors with U.S. nationalism.

The analysis of thirty articles about Blackwater from 2004-2011 found many trends and themes. The strongest theme found was the evolution of portrayals of

²²⁷ Priest, “Private Guards Repel Attack on U.S. Headquarters”; Yeoman, “Need an Army? Just Pick Up the Phone”; Priest, “Private Guards Repel Attack on U.S. Headquarters”; Townsend, “The World: Fury at security firm’s ‘shoot for fun’ memo”; Miller, “Iraq contractor focus of hearing;Victims’ kin cite ‘profiteering’ by Blackwater USA.”

²²⁸ Partlow and Raghavan, “Iraq Probe of U.S. Security Firm Grows; Blackwater, Accused of Killing 11 on Sunday, Cited in Earlier Deaths”; Yeoman, “Need an Army? Just Pick Up the Phone”; Scahill, “Bush’s mercenaries thrive in Iraq;President relies on thousands of private soldiers with little oversight, a troubling example of outsourcing of U.S. military, writes Jeremy Scahill.”

²²⁹ Barstow, “Civilians hired as private guards in Iraq fight alongside U.S. military: Mercenaries drawn into firefights”; Baldwin, “Security firm boss defends Iraq role.”

²³⁰ Rubin and Kramer, “Iraqi Premier Says Blackwater Shootings Challenge His Nation’s Sovereignty”; Kessler and DeYoung, “Blackwater Focused on Cost, Not Safety, Report Says.”

²³¹ Miller, “Iraq contractor focus of hearing;Victims’ kin cite ‘profiteering’ by Blackwater USA,” A04.

²³² Baldwin, “Security firm boss defends Iraq role.”

Blackwater from 2004-2011. In the beginning many media sources had neutral positions on the company; however over time controversies lead to more negative views. International publications also tended to have a more negative view of Blackwater than U.S. published articles. It was found that headlines were sensationalized. Another interesting finding was the neglect of contractors themselves in the articles. While a small number of incidents involving Blackwater contractors were discussed often, contractors were highly ignored. It was also discovered that the newspapers portrayed Blackwater as an agency with loose ties to U.S. nationality and only out to make money. Yet there were a handful of articles that touched on how Blackwater contractors may benefit the U.S. The implications of these findings will be discussed in chapter 5.

B. What the Demographics Suggest

When searching for demographics on PMC contractors for this study it became apparent very quickly that this task would not be easy. Firstly, contractor numbers and demographics were not easily available. Secondly, sources that did contain contractor demographics varied widely. In 2008 the numbers of contractors in Iraq was thought to be between 20,000 and 50,000.²³³ With this much variation it is hard to make inferences. Finally, most sources did not differentiate between types of contractors in use by the US. For example, a cook as well as an armed security guard would be counted in the total, making it difficult to decipher the amounts of PMC contractors and the logistics of their contracts. However, two very important congressional reports were published while the research for this study was ongoing. On May 13, 2011 the Congressional Research

²³³ Z. Salzman, "Private Military Contractors and the Taint of a Mercenary Reputation," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 40 (2007): 853-892.

Service published a detailed report on the U.S. Department of Defense contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan.²³⁴ Then on August 31, 2011 the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan released the most comprehensive report to date on the use, cost and risks of government contractors.²³⁵ These two reports were heavily relied on for this section as they were more up to date and comprehensive than any other source.

One trend found in the demographics of contractors is that their use has been dramatically on the rise since the end of the Cold War and the use of contractors has only increased since the beginning of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.²³⁶ While many groups lump all contractors together the Department of Defense “does not report the breakdown of services that contractors provide in Afghanistan, with the exception of data on private security contractors.”²³⁷ In March 2011 the Department of Defense reported 90, 339 contractors in Afghanistan, yet the Congressional Research Service report did not contain a breakdown of which contractors were PMCs.²³⁸ They did provide this data for Iraq where 18% of approximately 64,000 contractors in March 2011 were performing security functions.²³⁹ An August 2011 congressional report on contractors found that between the Department of Defense, Department of State and U.S. Agency for International

²³⁴ Moshe Schwartz and Joyprada Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*, CRS Report for Congress, May 13, 2011.

²³⁵ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*, August 31, 2011, https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://wartimecontracting.gov/docs/CWC_FinalReport-lowres.pdf&embedded=true&chrome=true&pli=1.

²³⁶ Ryan Kelty, “Citizen Soldiers and Civilian Contractors” Soldiers’ Unit Cohesion and Retention Attitudes in the ‘Total Force’.,” *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 37, no. 2 (Winter2009 2009): 133-159.

²³⁷ Schwartz and Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*, 10.

²³⁸ Schwartz and Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

Development there were over 260,000 contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁴⁰ In Iraq, contractors now outnumber military personnel,²⁴¹ however this statistic can be misleading as the number of security based contractors is still much lower than military personnel.²⁴² Security contracts account for 11% of contracts in Iraq or 13,145 individuals.²⁴³ This information was not given on Afghanistan. The Department of Defense plans on decreasing the number of contractors in Iraq over the next year, but this is offset by a planned increase by the Department of State.²⁴⁴ The numbers vary from year to year, but overall the use of contractors, including PMCs, has risen significantly in the last decade.

Contractor casualties have been on the rise, which should come as no surprise with the increase in numbers of contractors. A major complaint for years from contractors and those who want accountability for contractors has been the lack of reporting on contractor casualties.²⁴⁵ That is why the 2011 Commission on Wartime Contracting report has been praised for confirming “what many of us who follow the issue have long known but doesn't get nearly enough public mention,” contractor casualties.²⁴⁶ From March 2003 until July 2011 there were 1,542 contractor deaths in Iraq compared to 4,464 U.S. military casualties. In Afghanistan there were 887 contractor deaths from October

²⁴⁰ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Schwartz and Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*.

²⁴³ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ David Isenberg, “War and Private Contractors: Can’t Live with Them, Can’t Live Without Them,” *Huffington Post*, September 2, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-isenberg/war-and-private-contracto_b_944365.html.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

2001 to July 2011 compared to 1,667 U.S. military casualties.²⁴⁷ The report gathered the information for contractor casualties from the Department of Labor and did admit that foreign contractor employee deaths are thought to often go unreported and that, “No definitive accounting for federal civilian-employee deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan has been located.”²⁴⁸

Coming with this increase in use of contractors was an increase in cost. By the end of the 2011 fiscal year the U.S. government is expected to have paid over \$206 billion dollars to contracting companies. “The money goes to two categories of activities: first, support of U.S. operations, such as logistics; and second, direct execution of programs like training host-country military and police forces.”²⁴⁹ A breakdown of what percentage of this cost goes into PMCs was not available. This cost was found to be very wasteful and it has been estimated that \$31 to \$60 billion has been either wasted or lost to fraud.²⁵⁰ Fraud is often attributed to contract companies charging for services that were never provided.²⁵¹ David Isenberg broke down how much has been wasted every year since the start of the War in Afghanistan, “let's take the middle of that range, say, \$45 billion, or \$4.5 billion a year (for 10 years). That works out to \$12,328,767 a day, \$1,875,000 an hour, \$31,250 a minute and \$520 per second.”²⁵²

²⁴⁷ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁵⁰ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*.

²⁵¹ Barakat, “Blackwater accused of fraud by employees”; “Waxman”; Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*.

²⁵² Isenberg, “War and Private Contractors: Can’t Live with Them, Can’t Live Without Them.”

One of the troubling findings of the reports on the use of contractors was the missing information on individual contracts. Claims are often made that contractors are overpaid²⁵³ but little data is available on what individual contractors make. It is unclear how much of the \$206 billion dollars has gone to contractors, companies or overhead such as equipment. Deaths of individual contractors are one of the few statistics in governmental reports on the individual contractors. Another statistic available on contractors focuses on their nationality. In Iraq, U.S. nationals serve on 28% of contracts, third-party nationals serve on approximately 57% and Iraqis serve on 15%. Afghanistan is much different with 51% of contracts taken by Afghans, 26% by third-party nationals and 23% by U.S. citizens.²⁵⁴ A breakdown of security contracts in Iraq was given: of 13,145 security contractors in Iraq 773 were U.S. citizens, 8,686 were third party nationals and 3,686 were Iraqi.²⁵⁵ This information was not available for Afghanistan.

In addition to the lack of information about individuals working on contracts, questions remain about the validity of the information released by the government about contractors. Many academics question how many contractors really exist as, “Official numbers of such contracts are nearly impossible to track given the poor regulation and oversight of contracting within the Department of Defense.”²⁵⁶ This criticism is not only a concern of academics but also by the U.S. government itself. The May 2011

²⁵³ Deborah D Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Pratap Chatterjee, *Iraq, Inc: a profitable occupation* (Seven Stories Press, 2004); P. W Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*, Updated ed. (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2008).

²⁵⁴ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Kelty, “Citizen Soldiers and Civilian Contractors,” 134.

Congressional Research Service report on the Department of Defense stated that “a number of analysts have questioned the reliability of DOD’s contractor data.”²⁵⁷ The Department of Defense, Department of State and US Agency for International Development all have systems in place to distinguish between private security contractors and other contractors. However, a 2010 government report found that these systems of distinction “cannot be used to reliably distinguish personnel performing security functions from other contractors.”²⁵⁸ These findings are troubling and call into questions all information on U.S. government contractors.

Information on government contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan lacks in many areas. The only concrete data on individual contractors is their nationalities and deaths.²⁵⁹ These numbers are debated as validity questions remain on their accuracy. However, even with the concerns of the data about contractors there are general trends that should not be discounted. The use of contractors is on the rise and all indicators point to the continued rise of the use of contractors, which includes the rise of security contractors.²⁶⁰ Overwhelmingly, contractors on U.S. contracts are not American citizens, and in

²⁵⁷ Schwartz and Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*, 5.

²⁵⁸ Government Accountability Office, *Iraq and Afghanistan: DOD, State, and USAID Face Continued Challenges in Tracking Contracts, Assistance Instruments, and Associated Personnel*, Report to Congressional Committees, October 2010, 11.

²⁵⁹ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*; Schwartz and Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*; Government Accountability Office, *Iraq and Afghanistan: DOD, State, and USAID Face Continued Challenges in Tracking Contracts, Assistance Instruments, and Associated Personnel*.

²⁶⁰ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*; Schwartz and Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*.

Afghanistan, locals are often used to fill the role.²⁶¹ These trends and statistics have interesting implications that are discussed in chapter 5.

C. How Contractors View Themselves

Talking with PMC contractors directly is one of the most effective ways to understand the effects on traditional views of nationality when it comes to the use of private military companies. That is exactly what this study did, obtaining twelve interviews from twelve former and current contractors in which issues of identity, nationality, and patriotism were discussed. There were numerous trends and themes that presented themselves in the analysis of the interviews. While contractors took jobs with PMCs partially for money, resume building and a chance to travel; they also felt they were helping their countries and keeping people safe. While not serving in a traditional military environment, these contractors still had a great deal of patriotism and love for their countries. Throughout the interviews they were constantly justifying their decisions to work for a PMC and defending contractors. However, they all expressed some variation of concern of contractors going rouge or dangers of the field getting out of hand. The major themes and findings are presented below. Please note that while many quotes are given from the participants all names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

There was not much variation in the contractors' nationality. Eleven of the contractors are Americans. Some Americans did describe their nationality a little differently when asked, "What is your nationality?" Karl Cammalleri described himself

²⁶¹ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*.

as Hispanic American.²⁶² Walter Carter described his nationality as African American.²⁶³ Finally, David Little explained that he was born in Australia but is a naturalized American citizen.²⁶⁴ The only non-American was John Stall who considers himself Canadian, but was born and raised in England.²⁶⁵ The contractors were also all male.

Many contractors served in the military at some point in their lives and were deployed overseas for their countries during their service. Stall served in the British forces for twelve years before serving in the Canadian forces for ten as an intelligence officer, serving overseas for both Britain and Canada.²⁶⁶ Five of the twelve interviewees were former U.S. Marines. One former Marine worked as a police officer after leaving the Marines. Four had served in the U.S. Army, of which one is now in the U.S. National Guard reserves. Two of the four contractors who were in the Army were also police officers at one point in their careers. The only two contractors who never served for their nations' military, Justin Dumann and Andrew Gomez, worked for PMCs after retiring as police officers. For those in the military, service ranged from six to twenty six years. Three contractors were medically retired from the military and were ineligible to continue and two chose to retire from the Army after over 25 years of service. Not all of those who served in the military said if they had served overseas or not, but those who did disclose where they had gone served all over the world including Iraq, Afghanistan, Asia, Africa, Mexico, Colombia and the South Pacific.

²⁶² David Little, "PMC Interview #4," In Person Interview, August 24, 2011.

²⁶³ Walter Carter, "PMC Interview #12," Oral Phone Interview, September 2, 2011.

²⁶⁴ David Little, "PMC Interview #4."

²⁶⁵ John Stall, "PMC Interview #11," Oral Phone Interview, September 2, 2011.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Nearly all of the PMC contractors still had jobs relating to the security field and many were going back to work for a PMC. Of the twelve contractors interviewed, seven were still in the PMC field having just come off contracts or going into new ones. One of the interviewees, Scott Ryan, was a self proclaimed mercenary and is still active, always seeking contracts.²⁶⁷ Ryan was the only interviewee to describe himself as a mercenary which brought up some very interesting anomalies which are explained later in this section. One former contractor, Aaron Richards, has gone back to his previous job as a police officer and is a reservist in the U.S. National Guard, although he did say he would consider working for a PMC again.²⁶⁸ Two former contractors are still working in conflict zones, both in Afghanistan, one as an operations manager for an Afghan company²⁶⁹ and the other as a regional director for a USAID funded program.²⁷⁰ Finally, the only former contractor not in the security field was Darrell Thomas who left the field after becoming 100% disabled while injured on contract for a PMC.²⁷¹

The countries that the contractors served in varied widely, but all had taken contracts recently, with no contracts taken before 2000. Nine contractors had worked in either Iraq or Afghanistan since the start of the U.S. wars. The three who haven't worked in Iraq or Afghanistan have worked elsewhere in the Middle East, Mexico, Kosovo, Liberia or Haiti. Many of the contractors have worked in so many countries that when asked they listed general areas such as Asia, Northern Africa and Europe. It is obvious that these twelve men have taken contracts all over the world; however they have

²⁶⁷ Scott Ryan, "PMC Interview #8," Oral Phone Interview, August 28, 2011.

²⁶⁸ Aaron Richards, "PMC Interview #10," Oral Phone Interview, August 30, 2011.

²⁶⁹ Jacob Thornton, "PMC Interview #1," Oral Skype Interview, August 23, 2011.

²⁷⁰ Neil Nash, "PMC Interview #6," Oral Skype Interview, August 27, 2011.

²⁷¹ Darrell Thomas, "PMC Interview #5," Oral Phone Interview, August 26, 2011.

overwhelmingly had assignments in Afghanistan and Iraq. Justin Dumann has worked the longest as a contractor, working on and off since 2000 for a total of seven years for private military companies.²⁷² Aaron Richards has worked the least amount of time as a contractor, only working one six month contract in Iraq but may work for a PMC again.²⁷³

Due to the secretive nature of the field not all of those who were interviewed shared what they did as a PMC contractor. Those who disclosed their positions had various jobs. The majority of positions were security or training related, with some contractors having done both under different contracts. The security positions included providing armed security at U.S. military bases as well as working as personal security detail (PSD) for specific individuals. The PSD positions varied from protecting high profile military members and U.S. government officials in Iraq and Afghanistan, to protecting private corporations in Mexico. Former police officers worked for contracts as instructors for police forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. Other instructional contracts included land mine detection training and U.S. military operations training.

A common theme for most of the contractors was that they missed their military service, some wishing they could go back or regretted never joining or not re-enlisting. The reasons for this varied from missing the comradery to missing the action. Only five of the contractors voluntarily left the military before retirement or were forced to leave due to medical reasons. One of the five was John Stall who served a combined 22 years

²⁷² Justin Dumann, "PMC Interview #7," Oral Phone Interview, August 28, 2011.

²⁷³ Aaron Richards, "PMC Interview #10."

between Canadian and British forces.²⁷⁴ For Jacob Thornton and Robert Sharp it was about the inflexibility of the Marine Corps. As Thornton put it, “I didn’t necessarily want to get out but I wanted to do something else.”²⁷⁵ Darrell Thomas always regretted leaving the Marine Corps to become a police officer. As he puts it, “I got out to work for a career path that was different. I’ll tell you the truth, it was a mistake. I should have never gotten out.”²⁷⁶ Those who were medically retired expressed feelings of frustration for not being able to stay in the military. As Karl Cammalleri, who was forced to leave the Marine Corps due to injury, explained, “I really had a longing for the military comradery ... To work with the Marines and not be in the Marine Corps is really cool because I do miss the Marines and I didn’t want to leave.”²⁷⁷ Missing the action of serving in the military was also mentioned by many. Cammalleri explained when he went back to Iraq as a contractor, “It was like being at home out there with the sounds of the incoming rockets and mortar attacks... I missed the action.. I know it sounds weird but it helps me sleep really well.”²⁷⁸ Scott Ryan who was medically retired from the military said he “couldn’t sit still anymore.”²⁷⁹ Many also expressed notions that one of their favorite aspects of their job was working with members of their former service. Neil Nash enjoyed going out with the Marines in his spare time, “part of the reason I’m here is because I can go embed

²⁷⁴ John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

²⁷⁵ Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

²⁷⁶ Darrell Thomas, “PMC Interview #5.”

²⁷⁷ Karl Cammalleri, “PMC Interview #3,” Oral Phone Interview, August 24, 2011.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Scott Ryan, “PMC Interview #8.”

with the Marines.”²⁸⁰ It was apparent that many of the contractors missed being in the military and many joined PMCs to lessen this feeling.

PMC contractors were asked why they joined a PMC instead of re-enlisting in the military or joining the military if they had not served before. As was explained above, three individuals were medically retired and had no option of re-enlisting. The few military members who chose to get out before retirement and the police officers who never served gave various reasons for not enlisting. Some explained family reasons while others simply wanted a change in their careers. When Justin Dumann, a lifelong police officer, was asked why he never joined the military he simply stated, “Because I was a police officer. My career had been a police officer.”²⁸¹ Andrew Gomez, another lifelong police officer always regretted not joining the military. He chose to join the police force instead of joining the military so that he could stay close to family. Not ever serving in the military was a major reason he became a PMC contractor. When he took his first contract he was too old to enlist in the military but “I had never served in the military, I felt it was a way for me to be able to do that.”²⁸² While the reasons for not re-enlisting or not joining the military differ what is significant are the answers that were not given. None of the interviewees left because of disdain for the armed forces. All gave reasons for not continuing service or no joining but none gave any indication of harboring negative feelings for the military.

²⁸⁰ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

²⁸¹ Justin Dumann, “PMC Interview #7.”

²⁸² Andrew Gomez, “PMC Interview #9,” Oral Phone Interview, August 29, 2011.

The reasons for joining a PMC varied, but there were some obvious trends. Most everyone who had served in the military mentioned their military service as a reason for joining a PMC. As stated earlier, some missed the military and others missed the action. Another trend that emerged was that many interviewees could not think of anything else they could do or that they were qualified for. Robert Sharp explained that when he got out of the military “with the job market the way it was, it was pretty much the easiest direction to go in.”²⁸³ Almost everyone mentioned the pay as a factor at some point. However, while nearly everyone mentioned money as a factor hardly anyone named it as the main factor and many quickly moved on from the money issue. Often, when pay was mentioned as a reason for becoming a PMC it was quickly followed by other justifications. For example Andrew Gomez explained that, “I wanted to pick up some money for retirement and in addition to that I had never served in the military, I felt it was a way for me to be able to do that.”²⁸⁴ And Aaron Richards who began with, “It was a good financial opportunity, but at the same time it gave me the opportunity to go do some extra training.”²⁸⁵ The opportunity to travel was a driving factor for some. Other contractors wanted a change in scenery. As John Stall explained, “I had done my 22 years (in the military) and wanted to expand my horizons and at the same time thought it was a good time to start another career.”²⁸⁶

Many joined PMCs for patriotic reasons, believing that their work was aiding national interests. Darrell Thomas explained that he joined because his family needed the

²⁸³ Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2,” Oral Phone Interview, August 24, 2011.

²⁸⁴ Andrew Gomez, “PMC Interview #9.”

²⁸⁵ Aaron Richards, “PMC Interview #10.”

²⁸⁶ John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

money but added that he took the contracting job because of “You know, the patriotic part.”²⁸⁷ Gomez thought “it was a way to serve the U.S., my country, and I knew that every civilian police advisor that went to Afghanistan means that those under contract allow for a couple of U.S. soldiers to stay home.”²⁸⁸ For Richards it was a way “to help out my country during a war time situation.”²⁸⁹ Walter Carter’s only response to why he joined a PMC was, “Well, to just help further the interests of the United States of America. It may sound corny, but it’s realistic.”²⁹⁰ What the contractors saw as the advantages and disadvantages are talked about below, the reasons why they joined truly shed light on the motivating factors of working for a PMC.

Those who served in the military talked about the advantages of working for a PMC instead of the military. Overwhelmingly the two most talked about advantages of working for a PMC instead of the military were personal freedom and a high salary. As stated earlier, money was often given as an afterthought. Many explained that high pay was a benefit of contracting work but not the reason that they chose to work for a PMC. Another motivating factor that participants saw as an advantage of working with a PMC instead of the military was personal freedom. Thornton explained that, “Well you don’t have to shave every day. You can let your hair grow a little bit. It’s more, you have more freedom, more personal freedom. You can quit if you want. Less rules.”²⁹¹ Robert Sharp shared this sentiment saying, “You have the option to quit if you want to. You can pick

²⁸⁷ Darrell Thomas, “PMC Interview #5.”

²⁸⁸ Andrew Gomez, “PMC Interview #9.”

²⁸⁹ Aaron Richards, “PMC Interview #10.”

²⁹⁰ Walter Carter, “PMC Interview #12.”

²⁹¹ Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

and choose who you work for...you have more freedom.”²⁹² Neil Nash shared not only what he saw as the advantages for himself but what he perceives of other contractors, “For me it’s the freedom of action. For some guys it’s the comradery. For the really junior guys, it’s being all in the gear and jacked up and riding around with a rifle in an armored car.”²⁹³ While money and freedom were the top two advantages of being a PMC contractor over military service, they were not the only ones. Other advantages included less politics in PMCs, working with top notch people, shorter contracts and more variety. There were two former military personnel who actually saw no advantages for working with a PMC instead of the military. Both of these men were medically retired from the military and did not want to leave. When asked what the advantages were Scott Ryan simply replied, “My god, the advantage? None. There’s no advantages.”²⁹⁴ Karl Cammalleri said, “I really don’t see any advantages being a contractor over being in the military. A lot of guys, when they’re a contractor it’s all about chasing the dollar,” but for him it was about comradery and helping the military.²⁹⁵

General feedback on working for a PMC, not in comparison with the military, was also given. Many talked about the experience itself as being a huge advantage; being able to travel and meeting people from different cultures. As Justin Dumann explained, “Being able to work with people from different countries, diverse backgrounds, diverse cultures, you’re learning something every day. You’re being exposed to new ideas, new

²⁹² Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2.”

²⁹³ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

²⁹⁴ Scott Ryan, “PMC Interview #8.”

²⁹⁵ Karl Cammalleri, “PMC Interview #3.”

concepts, some good, some bad. You learn quite a bit about the world.”²⁹⁶ In addition to the opportunity to travel and meet individuals from around the world, many contractors view their work as a great opportunity to gain experience and build their resumes.

Andrew Gomez explained how contracting has helped him become a better police officer, “it makes me a much better terrorism, counter terrorism, anti-terrorism officer...it gives you a lot of expertise and it looks really good on your resume.”²⁹⁷ In addition to the advantages of gaining life experiences and bettering career options many shared the same sentiment that Thornton does when he explains, “Well, it’s fun, it’s a fun job...pretty easy, easy job.”²⁹⁸

While some contractors had a hard time thinking of advantages of working for a PMC, they easily rattled off lists of disadvantages. When asked about disadvantages Neil Nash went on for minutes summing up the disadvantages as, “So you’ve got (sub-standard) living conditions. You’ve got weapons that don’t work or poorly if they work at all. You’ve got the ability to be fired at the drop of a hat for no reason what so ever. You have no rights at all.”²⁹⁹ Lack of job security and lack of support were the top disadvantages given by the participants. John Stall explained that, “There’s the financial unknown, but also you’re much more on your own. If you get into an isolated situation, you don’t have 2000 of your closest friends to come help you.”³⁰⁰ The lack of support was seen as a major risk to contractors who shared concerns of what would happen if they were injured. Darrell Thomas, who lost his leg while working for a PMC in Iraq

²⁹⁶ Justin Dumann, “PMC Interview #7.”

²⁹⁷ Andrew Gomez, “PMC Interview #9.”

²⁹⁸ Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

²⁹⁹ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

³⁰⁰ John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

said, “It’s a far different after care system when we’re talking about the Defense Care Act.” Many worried about the lack of support in emergency situations. “There is a lapse in insurance coverage and a lack of inclusion in anything.”³⁰¹ David Little, who is between contracts, often worries of what would happen if he were injured, “If I’m in the military and I get my leg blown off, I’m taken care of for life. I don’t get that as a contractor...so that’s an immediate disadvantage.”³⁰² There was also concern over the laws and restrictions put on PMC contractors from both the host country and the U.S. Little explained how not having a military ID card during times of war means that contractors are not included in the Geneva conventions which can lead to many issues. “We fall into a grey zone. So what that means if we’re ever captured, we’re not treated like regular soldiers.”³⁰³ Robert Sharp explained that contractors were restricted in what they could do because “you have a lot tighter restrictions by both the host nation and government of the U.S.”³⁰⁴ Some contractors also felt that their work was being ignored and not gaining the recognition it should. Thomas is often frustrated by the lack of coverage of contractors’ sacrifice, “You get paid and all of that extra dollar from what the military gets, basically for the luxury of the companies and agencies and employers to ignore us and not care about us...you rarely, rarely hear of contractors stories. They pay you for the luxury for you to be invisible.”³⁰⁵ Many of the contractors shared this feeling including Andrew Gomez who said, “a lot of times contractor safety isn’t considered and sometimes we’re put in very dangerous positions and when there are contractor casualties

³⁰¹ Darrell Thomas, “PMC Interview #5.”

³⁰² David Little, “PMC Interview #4.”

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2.”

³⁰⁵ Darrell Thomas, “PMC Interview #5.”

you really don't see it in the news."³⁰⁶ Finally, negative perceptions of contractors from military personnel and locals were seen as a major disadvantage. Aaron Richards explained that even though most of the contractors he worked with, including himself, were former military, those still serving "seemed to have a real big animosity towards us as contractors and sometimes quite a bit of jealousy...so our support system was not quite as good (as the militaries)."³⁰⁷ Robert Sharp summed up the feelings of a lot of the contractors interviewed when he said, "You're kind of looked down upon by a lot of organizations for what you do."³⁰⁸ With a long list of disadvantages for working with a PMC there was recognition of taking on these contracts knowing the risks they come with. Thomas explained that the money offset the disadvantages in some cases. John Stall explains that taking contracts has many disadvantages but, "It goes with the territory and its assumed risks."³⁰⁹ Jacob Thornton added, "We understand that we're not part of the military anymore and we accept the fact that it's riskier for us."³¹⁰

The relationships between contractors and military members were studied from the point of view of the contractor. More than half of the participants talked about a mostly positive relationship with military members, yet they all shared some reservations about the relationship. Walter Carter explains that, "at least 99% are receptive to us. We learn from them, they learn from us. We get along pretty well. But we have that less than 1% that look at us in a bad sense I guess."³¹¹ This need for each other was a common

³⁰⁶ Andrew Gomez, "PMC Interview #9."

³⁰⁷ Aaron Richards, "PMC Interview #10."

³⁰⁸ Robert Sharp, "PMC Interview #2."

³⁰⁹ John Stall, "PMC Interview #11."

³¹⁰ Jacob Thornton, "PMC Interview #1."

³¹¹ Walter Carter, "PMC Interview #12."

theme. John Stall elaborated on the issue, “I’ll give you (the military) a call if we get in trouble to come help us out, and at the same time we’ll keep you informed of what we see over there and what we find. So you’re better off creating a mutually supportive relationship rather than sort of vilifying it.”³¹² A lot of contractors explained that the militaries’ view of contractors was on a case by case basis and a good relationship depended on an honest effort by the contractor as well as the military members. Andrew Gomez believes that the relationship “depends on the individual contractor. If the individual contractor behaves himself in a responsible way and they work to build relationships with the military members I think you can overcome that (contention).”³¹³ For Karl Cammalleri it’s a matter of explaining your credentials and making a connection, “Making the guys forget that I’m a contractor and more that I use to be one of those guys.”³¹⁴ Most of the contention was seen as jealousy over the amount of money being made by contractors. Gomez explains that “there is a little bit of contention because there is a certain amount of jealousy because of the amount we make.”³¹⁵ Thornton explains further, “My experience is a mixture of jealousy and contempt, because a lot of the guys in the military think that contractors make a lot more money for doing the same job, and they don’t have to deal with all the, all the rules and regulations.”³¹⁶

Many believed that misperceptions of what contractors make and what they do led to contention with the military. “I think the military member sees private security guys as

³¹² John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

³¹³ Andrew Gomez, “PMC Interview #9.”

³¹⁴ Karl Cammalleri, “PMC Interview #3.”

³¹⁵ Andrew Gomez, “PMC Interview #9.”

³¹⁶ Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

kind of glorified mercenaries,” said Thornton.³¹⁷ Aaron Richards was very upset with these misperceptions, “a lot of the times they called us cowboys, they called us mercenaries was the biggest one that I always heard all the time, that we are nothing but mercenaries even though we were all from the U.S. military where I worked at and we were working under a State Department contract.”³¹⁸ While some thought the relationship was negative, most believed that it could improve and in some cases already has improved. Darrell Thomas believed that the relationship had “gotten much better in the last several years because now we’re the imbeds. We’re imbedded with normal military units and we’re basically the subject matter experts.”³¹⁹ Robert Sharp believed that the relationship has only gotten stronger over time as the military understands contractors’ roles more today than at the start of the Iraq war.³²⁰ Only one participant, Scott Ryan, who was a self proclaimed mercenary, felt that the relationship was negative and would always remain negative. Ryan avoids the military as much as possible because more times than not they engage him and his partner in fire fights.³²¹ However, this case is much different than the rest as Ryan is a mercenary and is not working in the large groups that most PMC contractors do. Overall, contractors had a positive outlook on their relationship with military members in conflict zones.

To understand how contractors view their nationality and identity it is important to get insight into what sort of role their national identity plays in their lives and how important it is to them. All but one participant felt they had strong connections with their

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Aaron Richards, “PMC Interview #10.”

³¹⁹ Darrell Thomas, “PMC Interview #5.”

³²⁰ Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2.”

³²¹ Scott Ryan, “PMC Interview #8.”

home countries. That one exception was Scott Ryan, the mercenary. When talking about how important being an American is to Ryan he explains, “The only reason I keep the passport is to keep collecting my medical retirement... We (mercenaries) always say that a good countryman leaves his country...we’ve left that country. Left it in the past and we don’t go back.”³²² However all others who had worked for PMCs had strong connections with their countries. David Little was very proud of being American, “I love America...I’ve got more freedom here than I could have anywhere in the world.” Aaron Richards talked about his heritage as an American, “I’m very patriotic and served my country for 26 years...my family has probably been involved in every conflict that this country’s had. So my family has always had a very proud tradition of serving in the military, (and) law enforcement.”³²³ In a skype video call with Neil Nash he simply raised his shirt sleeve to reveal a Marine Corps tattoo on his arms. He pointed at it and said, “I ride for the brand. It’s that simple. I have a very strong connection with my home country...no one is allowed to say shit about American while I’m around.”³²⁴ When asked about their nationality and whether or not it was important to them many contractors were taken aback by the questions. Darrell Thomas probably explained this feeling best when he said, “Living in America my whole life I don’t really know how to answer that question...It’s just there. I couldn’t imagine how I would not be American.”³²⁵ Many cited their nationality as their reason for becoming a contractor and working for a PMC. Nash explained that “I wouldn’t be doing this if I didn’t think it was

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Aaron Richards, “PMC Interview #10.”

³²⁴ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

³²⁵ Darrell Thomas, “PMC Interview #5.”

directly benefiting efforts on behalf of my home country.”³²⁶ Richards joined a PMC because he wanted to “put a lot of the skills I learned in the military and law enforcement to good use to help out my country during a war time situation.”³²⁷ The theme of a strong connection to one’s nationality cannot be under appreciated. As stated, all but one participant felt very strongly about their national identity and all interviews were full of quotes showing this.

Most contractors did not believe that being a PMC contractor conflicted with their nationality. Again, the only participant who believed that his work conflicted with his nationality was Scott Ryan who did mercenary work.³²⁸ John Stall was the only participant to hesitantly answer the question of if he believed being a contractor ever conflicted with his nationality. He replied that, “I haven’t faced that, but I believe it could.”³²⁹ All of the other ten participants were adamant about their work not conflicting with their nationality. As David Little explained, “I’ve got a real clear identity. If there is ever a discrepancy like that, if there is ever a problem like that, it’s USA, you know. I’m not going to be disloyal.”³³⁰

Along with harboring strong feelings of their own national identities the contractors interviewed also overwhelmingly believed that their co-contractors had strong connections with their national identities as well. Again, Scott Ryan who works with mercenaries was the only one who believed that other mercenaries had no connection to

³²⁶ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

³²⁷ Aaron Richards, “PMC Interview #10.”

³²⁸ Scott Ryan, “PMC Interview #8.”

³²⁹ John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

³³⁰ David Little, “PMC Interview #4.”

their countries.³³¹ While all those interviewed were American or Canadian, they have worked alongside contractors from all over the world. There were only two contractors who were unsure about other contractors' national identities, saying that the national identity of other contractors varied. Neil Nash believed PMC contractors he had worked with all had strong national identities "with the exception of the Zimbabweans and South Africans who don't have a whole lot of love for Mother Africa."³³² This statement was in contrast to others who had worked with Africans and found that they were nationalistic. John Stall explained his experience as very mixed. He has worked with Afghans who are very loyal and others who just want to get out of their country and migrate as well as "U.S. or European contractors, some are extremely loyal to their county and probably would put country first above company and then there's the absolute opposite where it's certainly company first, country second."³³³ The other nine contractors believed those that they have worked with have not lost their national identities. Robert Sharp stated that, "I work mostly with South Africans and a few Bosnians and they are still very, very loyal to their home countries."³³⁴ It was apparent that the interviewees believed that national loyalties remained strong. However Andrew Gomez brought up an interesting thought, "I have seen that they do have strong ties with their countries. I think that, I do see though that when they work for contracts for the U.S. government...they develop a certain amount of loyalty to America also."³³⁵

³³¹ Scott Ryan, "PMC Interview #8."

³³² Neil Nash, "PMC Interview #6."

³³³ John Stall, "PMC Interview #11."

³³⁴ Robert Sharp, "PMC Interview #2."

³³⁵ Andrew Gomez, "PMC Interview #9."

Working for PMCs that are not connected to one's nation could call into question the national identity of contractors. As a result some contractors took issue with individuals who worked for other countries. Aaron Richards was the only individual who voiced a lot of concern. He believes that if contractors are taking work with PMCs that are contracted out by the U.S. government it can be ok but "I have a little bit of a problem with these. There's plenty of American companies that are out there that are available for an American citizen to get with."³³⁶ He mentions money as a causal factor for taking these contracts. Karl Cammalleri shared the same views, saying, "That gets into the money aspect."³³⁷ Many contractors took no issue with individuals working for other countries and some had even done so themselves. Six of the contractors interviewed have already taken contracts for other countries than their own. Three contractors would seriously consider taking non-U.S. contracts. There are three participants who said they would not consider working for a PMC that was not involved with their country. Some still used nationalistic ideologies to justify this decision. Walter Carter explained that he would take a non-U.S. contract "as long as I can contact the U.S. Consulate and they okay it."³³⁸ Darrell Thomas would have refused any contract that wasn't American, "I think with my motivations wrapped around the good versus evil against the U.S., it would be kind of tough for me to do that kind of life style and consider myself 100% mercenary and work for another country in another zone."³³⁹ Neil Nash has taken contracts with other countries before, explaining that, "I had no problem with anybody working for a

³³⁶ Aaron Richards, "PMC Interview #10."

³³⁷ Karl Cammalleri, "PMC Interview #3."

³³⁸ Walter Carter, "PMC Interview #12."

³³⁹ Darrell Thomas, "PMC Interview #5."

government with whom the United States is maintaining an active partnership in this endeavor.”³⁴⁰ Others used ideas of morality and ethics to explain when it is acceptable to work for a country other than their own. David Little explained that he would take a contract for another country providing it passed the “smell test” to make sure nothing illegal or immoral is going to be asked of him.³⁴¹ Patriotic and moral reasons were rife when it came to PMC contractors who were willing to work for other governments or countries. Many were willing to work for others but not if it goes against their nation’s interest.

Working for other countries with a PMC was not a point of contention for some participants. The sort of contracts the PMC contractors were willing to take varied. There was a split between contractors who would take almost any contract as long as it was not against their country and those that would only take contracts in their field of expertise. Andrew Gomez would “take just about any security contract.”³⁴² While Gomez prefers working on U.S. military bases he was not opposed to other contracts. Many former police officers only wanted to take training contracts in areas they were familiar with. Darrell Thomas admitted that he was selective when looking at contracts, “Honestly the only one I really even looked at was to become a police trainer. I had been a cop my whole life and never even considered security or anything other than a training mission.”³⁴³ Being able to use their expertise and knowledge was important for most contractors.

No contractor mentioned money as a factor in contracts they were willing to take. More

³⁴⁰ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

³⁴¹ David Little, “PMC Interview #4.”

³⁴² Andrew Gomez, “PMC Interview #9.”

³⁴³ Darrell Thomas, “PMC Interview #5.”

important than what sort of contracts the participants were willing to take were the parameters they put around contracts they would not take. It became very clear that not one of the participants would take just any contract for a PMC.

There were obvious restraints in the type of contracts these men were and are willing to take. Those contractors who mentioned they would take just about any contract had guidelines within this broad statement. For example Robert Sharp explained that “the only way I would turn down a contract is if the U.S. or coalition forces were on the opposite side.”³⁴⁴ A majority of those interviewed also shared restrictions on contracts based on their nationality. While many would take contracts in other countries they would not do so if their country opposed it. Jacob Thornton mentioned that he “wouldn’t take a job protecting anyone that was fundamentally opposed to my beliefs” as an American.³⁴⁵ When asked if he would ever consider working for a non-U.S. country David Little replied, “They’d have to be offering some pretty good coin. And doing anything contrary to U.S. interests is totally out of the question.”³⁴⁶ Many would also refuse to take any sort of contract that is offensive in nature, or uses weapons for anything other than defense or training. Neil Nash explained that “anything that smells like using weapons in an offensive manner, I would never accept, because I can’t imagine it’s legal.”³⁴⁷ A few contractors did mention low wages or a lack of money as a reason for refusing certain contracts. Scott Ryan explained that he would never take maritime or

³⁴⁴ Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2.”

³⁴⁵ Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

³⁴⁶ David Little, “PMC Interview #4.”

³⁴⁷ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

narcotics related jobs because they do not pay enough money.³⁴⁸ Many contractors, as stated above, also mentioned ethical standards that would not allow them to take certain jobs with PMCs. Nash refused a contract because he believed that the company was doing something illegal, “There was one contract where bribes, of over two million dollars, were being delivered and I turned that down.”³⁴⁹ John Stall said, “There are certain things I am morally opposed to, either my own moral compass or a grounding of my family. I would like to say to my daughters that I did a good job today, you should be proud of me.”³⁵⁰ Whether it be their national identity or personal morals all the contractors had limits to the type of work they would take.

While all contractors interviewed had shared limits and ethical standards for taking contracts, most shared concerns of some contractors going rouge or breaking these ethical standards. Many shared stories of people they knew while others were concerned about stories they had heard. Many of the contractors have concerns that the PMCs are lessening their standards. Jacob Thornton explained that, “You are not held to a standard so there are a lot of people who couldn’t even make it into the military that end up as private guys.” David Little is very concerned that PMCs expanded so quickly as a result of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and that “there’s a whole spectrum of guys that are contractors and the quality is going down...they’re starting to scrape the bottom of the barrel.”³⁵¹ Thornton shared this concern adding, “they started getting a little bit too big, a little bit too out of control. As you see with Blackwater...that’s getting into some pretty

³⁴⁸ Scott Ryan, “PMC Interview #8.”

³⁴⁹ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

³⁵⁰ John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

³⁵¹ Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

heavy stuff.”³⁵² Many also shared stories of individuals they knew who did not have the same moral and ethical restrictions that held them back from certain jobs. Neil Nash said he would never take a contract with the offensive use of weapons because it is not legal but he does know contractors who do offensive operations. As he explains, “the business does attract its fair share of idiots.”³⁵³ Scott Ryan, the lone mercenary, did admit that “mercenaries are sometime unbiased for who they work for or what the reason.”³⁵⁴ While many admitted to knowing individuals in the field who are dangerous, they are often quick to explain that “these are the exceptions not the rules.”³⁵⁵

The PMC contractors were often adamant about the distinctions between mercenaries and PMCs. David Little did not believe that offensive operations by PMCs were inherently wrong, but he did explain the difference between what he calls mercenaries versus soldiers of fortune. “The difference is a mercenary will do anything for money technically...a soldier of fortune has a good and bad gauge.”³⁵⁶ Robert Sharp explained that “If it falls under something a mercenary should do then contractors shouldn’t be doing it.”³⁵⁷ The emphasis on this distinction was made by contractors who were tired of being misunderstood. As Walter Carter put it, “people think of contractors like Steven Segal type mercenary type killing and all that kind of thing. That’s not what every contractor is about.”³⁵⁸ Along with these distinctions between mercenaries and contractors, the contractors also showed anger and disgust at the Blackwater contractors

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

³⁵⁴ Scott Ryan, “PMC Interview #8.”

³⁵⁵ David Little, “PMC Interview #4.”

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2.”

³⁵⁸ Walter Carter, “PMC Interview #12.”

who were caught in controversy. Many were angry that they gave contractors a bad reputation. Karl Cammilleri had been very frustrated when he was mistakenly associated with Blackwater, “Not all of them (contractors) are troublemakers from Blackwater. You now people look at that and say, ‘Oh you’re a contractor you must be with Blackwater. You’re a murderer.’ And it’s not all like that.”³⁵⁹ For most of the participants it was very important to distinguish themselves from mercenaries as well as explaining the Blackwater incidents as rare.

Justification of their line of work was present in all interviews. Many themes found included talking about the historical use of PMCs and the need for contractors in war efforts. When David Little was explaining the difference between mercenaries and soldiers of fortune he also mentioned that “we’ve had mercenary organizations in every war that we have been in and freelancers and privateers.” He went on to add that it was a profession that would always be around.³⁶⁰ Robert Sharp thinks that some of the issue stems from the recent rise of PMCs in Iraq but in reality “if you look back, contractors, you know all the other terms they used for those guys, have been involved with the military since Alexander.”³⁶¹ John Stall shared the same view, “I think that’s one of the things that people forget is military companies or private military companies have been around for thousands of years and it isn’t going to change and they just get much more

³⁵⁹ Karl Cammilleri, “PMC Interview #3.”

³⁶⁰ David Little, “PMC Interview #4.”

³⁶¹ Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2.”

attention now because of the media.”³⁶² By explaining how PMC contractors have been around for centuries, participants seemed to be validating their profession.

Contractors were asked to describe the distinctions they saw between PMCs and state militaries. Common views on the type of work that PMCs are better suited for than the military included mundane tasks, security, maintenance and training. Supporting operations were seen as the number one priority for tasks among contractors so that they can free up military personnel. Jacob Thornton explained that, “properly trained private security can handle a lot, some of the mundane things, the daily transports.”³⁶³ John Stall believes that PMC contractors can free up the military by doing “some of the basic sort of mundane things, you know, moving materials, guarding convoys, guarding materials, guarding people, the non, really non combat stuff.”³⁶⁴ There were also a lot of tasks that contractors believed PMCs were able to carry out more efficiently than the military. “I think as far as PSD (personal security detail) work goes, I think the civilian contractors are probably far better suited for it than the military,” explained Aaron Richards, adding that contractors were better trained for the job than military personnel.³⁶⁵ Neil Nash believed that contractors are perfect for embedding in a community and building relationships, “The PSCs can send people into an area and give them the time it takes on the ground with which to establish a reputation...the military cannot do that.”³⁶⁶ A lot of contractors also believe that the perfect spot for them is on training missions, being able to pass down their expertise to militaries or police forces. Karl Cammalleri believes that

³⁶² John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

³⁶³ Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

³⁶⁴ John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

³⁶⁵ Aaron Richards, “PMC Interview #10.”

³⁶⁶ Neil Nash, “PMC Interview #6.”

training is important for PMCs because they can grow old on the job while bringing continuity and experience to train military forces.

Conversely, there were many tasks that contractors believed were better suited for the military, or in some cases should only be conducted by the military. All of the interviewees believed that the military is better suited for direct offensive operations. As Neil Nash put it, “projecting power, offensive operations, killing people, that’s what militaries are good at.”³⁶⁷ Justin Dumann was the only PMC contractor to share reservations about contracting out mundane, non-operations tasks. Dumann said, “there is some interesting contracting stuff that goes on in the world, such as aircraft maintenance. I don’t understand why the military doesn’t handle that themselves. It comes down to money and who owns the contracting companies I’m sure.”³⁶⁸ However, Dumann also believed that the military was better suited for offensive operations. Overwhelmingly the PMC contractors interviewed shared this thought that militaries were much better suited for offensive operations than PMCs.

To understand how contractors felt about their job and to see who they believe should be working for PMCs, they were asked if they would recommend being a PMC contractor to others, and if so who they would recommend it to. Eleven of the twelve participants would recommend working for a PMC. The one person who did not recommend it was Scott Ryan (the mercenary) who said, “I wouldn’t recommend it to nobody, not at all. It’s a terrible job. It’s a horrible job. That would be mean.” However all other contractors said they would recommend working for PMCs. The contractors

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Justin Dumann, “PMC Interview #7.”

often gave stipulations to who they would recommend a contracting job to. The major themes that emerged were recommendations to those who had the right mentality and experience for the job. This experience was seen as either military or police experience in high pressure situations. Jacob Thornton would recommend the job to “someone that has the correct mentality, the right training, the right experience. It’s not for everyone.”³⁶⁹ Justin Dumann went into the type of personality that is needed for a contractor to succeed, “you have to be flexible and adaptable....you have to be open minded to do this kind of work. It’s not for everybody, no way.”³⁷⁰ An interesting note to mention was that those who had retired from the military after over 20 years service believed that young men and women should not join PMCs at a young age, but instead gain experience with the military and only join once they retire. John Stall believes that “you need to go do an apprenticeship and the apprentice is in the military...Getting signed up so when you step out you know what you’re capable of doing, you know what you shouldn’t be doing.”³⁷¹ David Little and Neil Nash both retired from the U.S. armed forces and both believe that those who want to be contractors need to serve in the military for at least 20 years, get a lot of experience and then use that to their advantage to obtain more coveted PMC positions in training and managing. All but one of the PMC contractors believed that contracting work was worth recommending to others as long as they had the right experience and personality for the job.

³⁶⁹ Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

³⁷⁰ Justin Dumann, “PMC Interview #7.”

³⁷¹ John Stall, “PMC Interview #11.”

The contractors shared very different responses to the reactions that they usually receive from people who find out they are contractors. Nearly all of the contractors received mixed reactions when they tell people they work for PMCs, some positive and some negative. Jacob Thornton broke down reactions by how knowledgeable people are, “If they are very well informed then it’s usually a fairly positive reaction, if they’re moderately well informed, well then it’s usually a negative, and if they’re not informed at all they don’t care.”³⁷² Often people do not know what a PMC contractor does and are indifferent about the profession. Four of the twelve contractors said that a majority of the responses they get are confusion or indifference about the field. Karl Cammalleri has never had an extremely positive or negative reaction. He said that most people know he is a former military member and “are usually indifferent to it.”³⁷³ The largest concern was misinterpretations that some hold about contractors. “People will ask and they say, ‘well I’m sure you’re not telling me what you do over there... You’re probably a hired killer or a hired assassin or whatever.’”³⁷⁴

A lot of these misinterpretations are blamed on the media. Robert Sharp expresses frustration when he says, “I think people misunderstand what we do. For example, my father-in-law, he thinks I’m some mercenary, baby killing. How the movies portray you (contractors) couldn’t be further from the truth.” Aaron Richards believes that “the liberal media has very much blackened the eye of most of your civilian contractors, or just the reputation of being one. And that hasn’t helped any. A lot of people misunderstand the

³⁷² Jacob Thornton, “PMC Interview #1.”

³⁷³ Karl Cammalleri, “PMC Interview #3.”

³⁷⁴ Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2.”

mission of the guys doing private contracts...so they immediately think they are all doing mercenary work.”³⁷⁵ While contractors sometime have positive reactions to their line of work they are obviously bothered by the negative perceptions.

As a result of negative reactions some contractors do not openly share their line of work with others. Robert Sharp tries not to go into detail about his line of work, “I usually, if I don’t have to explain it I don’t. I leave it as, ‘I work overseas.’”³⁷⁶ For David Little “the worst thing is when they make cute remarks like, ‘Well if anybody comes around here you could kill them.’ I never want a body on my hands...I told my wife when we moved into the neighborhood up there I was going to see how long I could hold out before they figured out what I was doing.”³⁷⁷ For Andrew Gomez, a few negative reactions have led him to be weary of disclosing his job, “I try to avoid saying I’m a contractor...when I first started doing this it was, I didn’t mind saying I was a contractor. And when I said it I got kind of a negative vibe from people.”³⁷⁸ Walter Carter believes that misperceptions of contractors have lead to negative views. As a result he tells people he is an instructor but often avoids further details.³⁷⁹ These contractors were well aware of negative perceptions people hold about PMCs which has caused them to often hide what they do when they meet people.

The main findings of this study were that the PMC contractors interviewed were overall very patriotic. Nearly all had served in their countries’ militaries, police forces or both. Only one individual was willing to take contracts that may be at odds with his

³⁷⁵ Aaron Richards, “PMC Interview #10.”

³⁷⁶ Robert Sharp, “PMC Interview #2.”

³⁷⁷ David Little, “PMC Interview #4.”

³⁷⁸ Andrew Gomez, “PMC Interview #9.”

³⁷⁹ Walter Carter, “PMC Interview #12.”

county's interests, although he has not taken any to this day. It is apparent that contractors work for PMCs for a plethora of reasons including patriotism, high pay and a chance to experience something new. Conversely, they also reject contracts with PMCs for many reasons including patriotism, ethics and danger. The fact that all but one participant recommends working for a PMC shows that they believe it is a good opportunity and profession. Throughout the interview the PMC contractors were constantly justifying their work, making distinctions between what they do and what mercenaries do, talking about the need for their work, and bringing up the long history of the profession. These contractors were fully aware of negative perceptions a lot of people hold for PMCs. As a result they sometimes hide what they do from others. With all the findings and diverse answers obtained in the interviews, the themes and sentiments mentioned above were shared by nearly all participants. The results shed a bit of light onto the often misunderstood and secretive profession of PMC contractors.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

It is important to discuss and examine the major findings of this study to understand how they tie into already established theories and research. The main findings of the data analysis showed a large increase in the use and reliance on PMC contractors by the U.S. government. This trend showed no indication of slowing as contractor use continues to rise even as military troops are being scaled back in Iraq. These findings have major implications for current and future military operations. In addition to increased use, the data analysis results section showed that costs were not only on the rise, but often unaccounted for and wasted on PMCs. Two troubling findings of the demographic results were that little to no information exists in governmental reports about individual contractors and the admittance by academics as well as the government that data on PMCs is highly flawed and difficult to accurately determine. The media content analysis also showed a lack of information surrounding individual contractors, giving them little to no voice in the newspaper articles. Of the thirty articles analyzed only two talked directly with contractors.³⁸⁰ However, a very small number of high profile cases of contractor abuse were cited in nearly all articles when discussing the dangers of PMCs. It was found that overall the mass media's reporting on PMC

³⁸⁰ Kim Sengupta, "Blackwater founder 'setting up mercenary army for UAE,'" *The Independent (London)*, May 16, 2011, sec. World; "Private Security Workers Living On Edge in Iraq; Downing of Helicopter Shows Heightened Risks," *The Washington Post*, April 23, 2005, sec. A.

contracting was negative. Finally, while the interviews yielded a plethora of results and themes, a few major points should be focused on. First, contractors were found to be very patriotic overall, often going into their field as a direct result of nationalistic ideologies. Secondly, all of those interviewed placed restraints on the types of PMC jobs they would take and believed that PMCs should not act in the same manner as state militaries. Thirdly, the PMC contractors were very concerned with what they believed to be misinterpretations of their line of work, including the labeling of contractors as mercenaries with no limits. This in turn caused many of the participants to vehemently justify and defend the profession during the interview while also admitting that they often hid their occupation from others so as not to face scrutiny. Finally, the participants were often concerned with the lack of coverage and recognition given to PMC contractors for the work that they do. These major findings, as well as others from the result section, will be examined further for wider implications.

This section will examine the findings in relation to the original research questions and hypotheses while discussing their importance. The results will be analyzed in the context of theoretical backgrounds on national identity and cognitive dissonance as well as other studies on PMCs that were discussed in Chapter 2. While the results and possible implications of this study are important to understand, it is also important to understand the limitations of the research. After discussing the limitations this section will conclude with thoughts on future research possibilities to further understand the relationship between PMC contractors and identity.

A. Reexamining the Research Questions, Hypotheses & Theoretical Background

In order to provide context and wider meaning to these results, it is important to revisit the research questions and hypotheses that drove the study. As will be shown, some hypotheses were supported by the results while others were partially or wholly unsupported. The results also offered interesting answers to the research questions. The research findings themselves are insignificant if not backed by existing theories and studies. Therefore, when reexamining the research questions and hypotheses the theories from Chapter 2 on national identity, PMCs and cognitive dissonance will be used in conjunction with the results.

The main research question driving this study was: How do PMC contractors understand themselves as citizens? Looking over the results of the study PMC contractors view themselves as patriotic citizens of their country. Eleven of the twelve contractors had strong connections with their home country and all had either served in their countries military or on a local police force. Many shared views of wanting to serve their nation and of becoming contractors as a direct result of their citizenship to the U.S. It is interesting to note here that media outlets had very different views of these contractors, often ignoring their citizenship or portraying them as mercenaries who work for money, not loyalty.

The second and third questions were subsidiary to the first question. The second question was as follows: Do PMC contractors' understanding of themselves as citizens' call into question traditional views of patriotism, citizenship and sovereignty? The overwhelming answer to this question was "no." If anything, serving as a contractor only

solidified feelings of nationalism for many of those interviewed. However, one contractor did admit that there was the possibility of his nationality and profession conflicting. The interview with the self proclaimed mercenary revealed that he was the only individual interviewed who did not have strong feelings for his home country, even though he had served years in the army. The possibilities of researching mercenaries will be discussed in the section below.

The third question was as follows: How does PMC contractors' understanding of themselves as citizens affect their national identities and sense of self? In most cases their understanding of themselves as citizens was very strong and contributed to a stronger sense of national identity. However, this pride was often hidden. The contractors felt that their service contributed to national defense, yet they often hid what they did from others for fear of negative reactions. Therefore, much of their national pride came from their military or police service and their work with a PMC was just an extension of that.

The fourth and fifth questions were also subsidiary and revolved around theories of identity's role in conflict. The fourth question was as follows: What effect does PMC contractors' understanding of themselves as citizens and their national identities have in conflicts? The participants' national identities played a large role in conflicts. Many chose to work for PMCs because they retired from military service or did not have an option to continue due to injuries. For them it was an extension of their military service, a way to still serve their country.

The fifth and final question driving the study was the following: Do PMC contractors understanding of themselves as citizens affect the sort of conflicts PMCs are

willing to engage in or not willing to engage in and why? Again, national identity played a large role in what sort of conflicts the interviewees were willing to participate in. A few contractors admitted that they would not work in a conflict zone their countries were not involved in. Of those that would, many said they would seek approval from their country before agreeing to work for any foreign entity.

Before going into the original hypotheses of the study and looking at whether they were supported or denied, it is important to understand how theories of identity play a role in the answers that were given to the research questions. The need for these contractors to characterize themselves as part of a group was very apparent in the results. The hypothesis by Tajfel and Turner, that group identities become more salient in times of violent conflict that imperil the in group, appears to be affirmed based on the evidence from the interviews.³⁸¹ The contractors obviously believed they were in an ‘in group’ that included the military. Many referred to PMCs being on the same side as the military and fighting for the same purpose. Brewer’s theory of optimal distinctiveness also fits this description given by contractors. As her theory states, there is a need for individuality yet also need for group acceptance.³⁸² The contractors expressed this optimal distinctiveness between the individual and the group in their interviews. The participants often cited individual desires, preferences, and goals as reasons for joining a PMC. The severe limitations on freedom in the military caused some to leave. However, in a PMC the contractors were still able to help their country in a time of war while feeling a greater

³⁸¹ H. Tajfel and J. C Turner, “An integrative theory of intergroup conflict,” *The social psychology of intergroup relations* 33 (1979): 47.

³⁸² M. B Brewer, “Optimal distinctiveness, social identity, and the self,” *Handbook of self and identity* (2003): 480–491.

sense of independence and individuality. The use of citizenship to galvanize populations in times of war does not seem to be at risk from PMCs.³⁸³ The results of this study largely support theories of social identity as there is a strong sense of ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ distinctions.³⁸⁴ It also appears that the national identities of these contractors are often more salient than having a sort of ‘contractor identity.’ While many participants talked about joining PMCs for nationalistic reasons, none talked about choosing to become a contractor for a sense of community or identity. PMCs may be changing the ways that wars are fought, but the results indicated that national identities are not at risk of disappearing. The need to belong to a national group was still very strong for the participants.

In answering some of these questions, the results either supported or denied the hypotheses. The main hypothesis was that PMC contractors would have a less salient national identity than the average military member yet still maintain a sense of national identity. This question cannot be answered with absolute certainty since military members were not interviewed for the study and therefore their national identity could not be examined. Yet, the extremely patriotic rhetoric given by the participants makes it very plausible that the contractors have just as salient identity as military members. David Little, as with many of the others, shared his strong loyalty and nationality when he said,

³⁸³ Vamik D. Volkan, *Bloodlines: from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism* (Westview Press, 1998); Charles Tilly, “How War Made States, and Vice Versa,” in *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1992* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 67-95; Charles Tilly, *Identities, boundaries, and social ties* (Paradigm Publishers, 2005).

³⁸⁴ Thomas H. Eriksen, “Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict: The Significance of Personal Experiences,” in *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 42-68; Karina Valentinovna Korostelina, “Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities,” in *Social identity and conflict: structures, dynamics, and implications* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 181-199; Tajfel and Turner, “An integrative theory of intergroup conflict”; Volkan, *Bloodlines*; Tilly, *Identities, boundaries, and social ties*.

“I’ve got a real clear identify...I’m not going to be disloyal.”³⁸⁵ Again, theories of national identity help show the mechanisms behind why contractors are able to hold strong feelings for their nation. As Korostelina explains, level of difference, competitiveness and intergroup relations influence the salience of social identity.³⁸⁶ Since contractors are working along with the military against a common enemy, the differences between the groups are pushed to the background and a common identity is formed. Since many of the contractors interviewed were Americans working for American contracts, they saw themselves as patriots, working for national interests. This led to them having very salient national identities.

The second hypothesis stated that contractors would justify taking contracts with PMCs instead of reenlisting or joining the military through pay, benefits and personal needs. Evidence supporting this hypothesis emerged quite clearly from the interviews. High pay, benefits and personal freedom were reasons given in all the interviews as advantages of working for a PMC. Yet, this hypothesis cannot be completely confirmed as many interviewees had retired from the military after more than 20 years of service or left due to medical release. While the lure of money, benefits and personal freedom were used as reasons for joining PMCs, many did not have the option to reenlist or join the military. Yet for those who chose never to join the military or reenlist, the theory of cognitive dissonance can be used to understand how a strong national identity was still maintained. Cognitive dissonance theory states that “The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance

³⁸⁵ David Little, “PMC Interview #4,” In Person Interview, August 24, 2011.

³⁸⁶ Korostelina, “Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities.”

and achieve consonance...When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance.”³⁸⁷ Here dissonance was created between having a strong national identity yet serving for a private company instead of the military. The conflicting values of wanting to serve one’s country through the military and taking a job with a PMC were rationalized through the benefits gained while still assisting in national interests.

The third hypothesis holds that the mass media and popular culture have dehumanized contractors’ identities through misperceptions and negative coverage. The empirical data gathered in this study clearly supports this hypothesis. The newspaper articles reveal a very negative view of PMCs and the contractors that worked for them, often casting them as mercenaries. This negative coverage increased through the years, reaching a high point in 2007 after the controversy in which Blackwater guards killed civilians in Iraq. This incident, as well as a few other high profile cases of contractor abuse, was mentioned in nearly all the articles examined from 2007 to present. The focus by the media on these rare cases of PMC or contractor abuse lead to misconceptions that all contractors were involved in such activity. The participants echoed such sentiment in the interviews. Many were quick to explain that those cases were rare, that the media portrays contractors in a negative way, and that the field is misperceived as a result. This negative press led many of the contractors to not disclose to others what they do unless they must. This fits into social identity theory; there is a need for individuals to group

³⁸⁷ Leon Festinger, *A theory of cognitive dissonance* (Stanford University Press, 1957), 144.

themselves and others.³⁸⁸ National service is highly respected and admired in society. In fact many prototypes, or a physical example of the norms, values and beliefs of a society, are based on military personnel.³⁸⁹ When controversies over the high profile PMC contractor Blackwater emerged it can be understood why the media was quick to make a distinction between military members and PMC contractors. This ‘in group’ and ‘out group’ division led many in mass media to demonize the contractors as they were characterized as dangerous, gun slinging mercenaries. The negative perceptions of PMCs in the media have caused the PMC contractors to disassociate themselves from PMCs, but instead identify as individuals who help the military achieve its objectives.

The final hypothesis stated that while contractors are not as dangerous as suggested by media portrayals, they remain a national security risk since they may not be as invested in national interests as military personnel. Those interviewed did not support this claim as they felt they were just as committed as military personnel to the conflicts that they were assigned to as PMC contractors, including Iraq and Afghanistan. However, they brought up some points that may partially support the hypothesis. Every contractor observed individuals they knew personally or had heard of who worked for PMCs that were willing to bend their national identities for money and break moral and ethical barriers. This included stories of drug smuggling, incidents of war crimes and contractors who were trigger happy. The fact that individuals are willing to bend the rules for themselves or their companies does pose a threat to national security. However, it is believed this threat is relatively small. Just as the military has members who break the

³⁸⁸ Festinger, *A theory of cognitive dissonance*.

³⁸⁹ Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

law, so do PMCs. The main worry is the lack of accountability given to PMCs who break the rules, as many are never charged or punished, as has been shown in the difficulty of prosecuting Blackwater personnel.³⁹⁰ Theories of national identity show how important it is for individuals to feel part of a group, especially in times of war.³⁹¹ This need for social affiliation would make it difficult for an individual to go rouge and simply join a PMC for monetary reasons, without any identity connection. As with any organization there are individuals who pose a risk to the group. There may be individuals in the contracting field who are willing to fight for anyone without any allegiances, but this is highly unlikely to happen on a mass scale due to the psychological need to belong to identity groups.³⁹²

By understanding the results through the use of theoretical background this study is able to provide a better understanding of the importance of the results. The outcomes of this study point to a negative view of contractors by the mass media which was not supported by actual contractor actions. The national identities of the participants were very salient and played a role in who they were willing to work for and what they were willing to do as a PMC contractor. It is believed that PMC contractors could impose a risk to national security yet this chance is very small. The fact that all the contractors interviewed had expressed concern about the actions of rouge PMC contractors is cause to be cautious. However, the risk does not seem any greater and may even be comparable to military members who cause concern for national security at times when they break

³⁹⁰ James Risen, "U.S. strains to pull off Blackwater prosecutions; Questions of jurisdiction, evidence and immunity are hampering efforts," *The International Herald Tribune*, October 22, 2010, sec. News.

³⁹¹ Korostelina, "Formation of National Identity and Conflict Intentions of Minorities"; Volkan, *Bloodlines*; Marc Howard Ross, *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³⁹² Tajfel and Turner, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict."

laws or ethical standards. All the contractors interviewed held themselves to ethical and moral standards often guided by their national identity that would not cause concern for the countries they were from or that they worked for. These trends and findings are an important step in understanding who contractors are and how they view themselves, yet more is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the field.

B. Limitations of the Research and Future Research Possibilities

The results of this study point to significant findings that have greater implications on national security, identities, and the use of PMCs. However, the generalizations of the results have numerous limits and should not be over analyzed. The limitations of the study are important to recognize so that the research can be built upon and future research can add to the knowledge of PMC contractors. The limited time frame, small sample size and homogenous population used for the study are all areas that limit the results; nonetheless, they also offer important insight into the field. Given the small amount of information in the field about them, the research possibilities on the identities of contractors are numerous. A few suggestions on areas to expand upon using the research provided are given below.

The size of the study was relatively small and time constraints given for the research did not allow for a large sample to be obtained. With only twelve interviews and thirty newspaper documents analyzed there was a large group left untapped for research. The interviews provided great insight into the minds of PMC contractors, yet it would be irresponsible to believe that the views of twelve contractors can speak for all of those in the field. The media content analysis focused on thirty articles published between 2004

and 2011. It also focused on a case study of Blackwater. Taking into account the time constraints of the study, focusing on Blackwater made sense as it was the highest profile PMC during that time period and had the most media coverage. However, this increased coverage was partly due to the controversies Blackwater was involved in. While it may be difficult to find newspaper articles on PMCs that do not touch on Blackwater, it would be interesting to see how many exist and if their portrayal of contractors has a different point of view. By expanding the size of the study, results can be verified or possible adjustments can be made to the findings. It is important to verify if the results were in fact representative of contractors and media sentiment. It is suggested that a larger sample size be collected. Due to the secretive nature of the field obtaining additional interviews could be difficult and more time and patience would be needed to gain the trust of contractors for a larger sample. Other trends and ideas may emerge by interviewing additional people.

Another limit to the study's findings was the homogenous nature of the participants interviewed. While the fact that the participants were similar in many ways allowed for generalizations to be made about North American men who work for PMCs, it limited the extent to which these results could be applied to contractors who did not fit the demographic studied. Many contractors who work for PMCs are not North Americans. The contractors interviewed worked with people from all over the world. It would be interesting to gain the perspective of these individuals. Future research should examine if the results from this study can be generalized for PMC contractors of different nationalities or if they hold substantially different views than North Americans. Since

most of those interviewed were Americans working for contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan a strong correlation between national identity and their work with PMCs could be drawn. Yet individuals from Africa, Asia or South America whose governments are not actively involved in Iraq or Afghanistan may provide very different answers to the same questions. Those interviewed provided speculation as to what motivates other nationals to take contracts with PMCs including money and a wish to leave their country, but many also shared that those they worked with had very strong connections to their home countries even when working under a contract with another country. It would be interesting to broaden the nationalities interviewed to get other perspectives on the topic.

It is also important to know that all those interviewed were male. While the PMC contractor field is male dominated, it is not exclusive to men. Females should be incorporated into further studies to understand their motivations for joining PMCs. In addition to finding out their motivations it would be interesting to conduct a study on gender relations within PMCs and between contractors. Not much has been written on the subject, however Isabella Barker wrote an interesting piece in 2009 on how the dimensions of nationality and gender are organized in PMCs.³⁹³ This area should be explored and built upon so that the subject of gender is not forgotten when talking about PMCs.

The research was also limited by the fact that no military personnel were interviewed. In order to have a stronger sense of contractor national identity, it would be helpful to have the views of those who serve in the military as well. Some studies have

³⁹³ Isabelle V. Barker, "(Re)Producing American Soldiers in an Age of Empire," *Politics & Gender* 5, no. 2 (2009): 211-235.

been conducted in an attempt to understand how PMC contractors affect the attitude and retention rates of current military personnel. Ryan Kelty conducted a study of the U.S. National Guard that found that soldier comparisons with contractors negatively affected military cohesion and retention rates.³⁹⁴ This is important to research further as it is important to know if PMCs are in fact causing military units to become jealous and causing some military personnel to choose not to reenlist and instead join PMCs for benefits such as money or additional freedom (some of the reasons participants of this study left the military). Another interesting area of research would be the comparison of military views of national identity and contractor views of national identity. To be able to fully understand the salience of national identity of contractors, military views on national identity also need to be studied so that the two can be compared and contrasted.

To better understand the pros and cons of using PMC contractors in conflicts, future research should be conducted in all areas, expanding beyond nationality. Ideas surrounding national identity and contractors should be expanded on, but in order to understand the topic as a whole other research must be conducted. This includes a more in depth understanding for the logistics and numbers of contractors. Congressional reports have already stated that a lack of information on PMCs and contractors is dangerous.³⁹⁵ A serious effort needs to be made to obtain information on how widespread

³⁹⁴ Ryan Kelty, "Citizen Soldiers and Civilian Contractors: Soldiers Unit Cohesion and Retention Attitudes in the 'Total Force' .," *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 37, no. 2 (Winter2009 2009): 133-159.

³⁹⁵ Moshe Schwartz and Joyprada Swain, *Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background and Analysis*, CRS Report for Congress, May 13, 2011; Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Transforming Wartime Contracting: Controlling costs, reducing risks*, August 31, 2011, https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://wartimecontracting.gov/docs/CWC_FinalReport-lowres.pdf&embedded=true&chrome=true&pli=1; Government Accountability Office, *Iraq and Afghanistan: DOD, State, and USAID Face Continued Challenges in Tracking Contracts, Assistance Instruments, and Associated Personnel*, Report to Congressional Committees, October 2010.

the uses of PMC contractors are and the effectiveness of their use. This will allow a broader understanding of the possible advantages as well as dangers of using PMC contractors.

Other research possibilities include a focus on mercenaries instead of PMC contractors. The one interview for this study conducted with a self described mercenary provided a stark contrast to the other eleven interviews conducted with PMC contractors.³⁹⁶ The mercenary was the only individual who no longer felt a strong connection with his country and had a weak sense of national identity. He based his decisions on his own morals and ethics and was licensed through European countries and Interpol. Without the constraints of a national ideology holding back the kind of work he would take, morals and ethics acted as constraints. However, he did admit to illegal activity but believed that even though it was illegal he was doing it for the greater good. The vast difference between this one individual and the rest of the participants calls for further research on the differences between contractors and mercenaries who work in smaller teams with much more autonomy.

C. Concluding Remarks

This study offers a glimpse into the world of PMC contractors, and yet suggests the need for more extensive research. Building from existing studies and established theories, this study was able to add a little bit of knowledge that hopefully will be expanded upon in the near future. Understanding how PMC contractors view themselves is a very important step towards understanding how they act in conflict and what they are

³⁹⁶ Scott Ryan, "PMC Interview #8," Oral Phone Interview, August 28, 2011.

willing to work for and defend. The results of this study suggest that PMC contractors are often guided by their national identities, but there is still much to understand about the world of contractors.

The increased use of PMC contractors during wars often conjure up fears of mercenaries gone rouge, willing to kill for the highest bidder. Yet the results of twelve interviews for this study show a much different story. While the increased use of PMCs can be unsettling, it is apparent that the system is not as out of control as some make it seem. The contractors who were interviewed were very much restricted in what contracts they were willing to take based on their national identity and sense of morals. It was apparent that the accountability of contractors was not sufficient since the government does not have accurate statistics on their use. This does need to be resolved, but the fact that the statistics about contractors are not sufficient does not mean that all the contractors are up to something menacing.

The role national identity plays in the work PMC contractors do should not be ignored. In times of war it appears that in an 'us versus them' scenario in which contractors view themselves as part of a larger mission that includes the nation they are working with versus a common enemy. Justifications and defenses are used by contractors to validate their occupation. Many joined PMCs because they were unable to continue service in the military. Those who chose to leave justified their decision by saying they had more freedom and money than in the military but were still able to serve their country.

This study revealed that PMC contractors are often feared by the mass media. This leads to misperceptions and negative connotations. The contractors were very aware of this negative perception and as a result often hid their line of work from others. Results also indicated that the government is often unaware of the work PMCs are doing and a lack of oversight has led to massive amounts of overspending.

Most importantly this study attempted to understand the views of PMC contractors by going straight to the source. It is important for researchers to open a dialogue with contractors to understand who they are. All trends point to an increase in the use of PMCs. By understanding the individuals who chose to go into this line of work suggestions can be made on how to effectively utilize PMCs in conflicts. There is still much to be discovered about the growing use of PMC contractors. More research is needed on the accountability of PMCs and the identities of contractors. The results of this study can and should be built upon and expanded. The findings indicate a field that is largely untapped and individuals who want to dispel misconceptions about their line of work. As this field is expanded and analyzed, nation states will be able to make more informed decisions when turning to PMCs in the future.

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Curriculum Vitae

Jessica S. Lohmann graduated from El Modena High School, Orange, California, in 2005. She received her Bachelor of Arts from University of California, Davis in 2009. She was employed as an AmeriCorpVISTA in Washington, D.C. for one year and received her Master of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University in 2011.