



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mercenaries, Private Military Companies (PMC's) and the 'New Scramble' for Africa: The Interplay of Economics, Geopolitics and Shifting Alliances from the 'Old' to the 'New Scramble'

Bernard B Fyanka^{1*}, Abayomi Popoola², Segun Ogundeji³

Department of History and International Studies Redeemer's University Ede Osun State Nigeria

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jun 19, 2024 Accepted: Aug 6, 2024	<p>The use of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in Africa has increased in the past two decades as a result of emerging conflicts over terrorism, resource control and insurgency. This development is however playing out against the backdrop of a 'New Scramble' for Africa as Western and Eastern powers are all engaged in this new rush for influence and control in Africa. This is challenging traditional European dominance of the foreign policy tilt of the continent and putting the sovereign identity of African nations at stake. The paper traces the historical and ideological nexus between the 'old Scramble', Mercenaries of the post-colonial era and the PMCs of the 'new scramble'. It attempts to situate the role of privatised security in the foreign policy and economics of both the African Nations and the source nations from which mercenaries and PMCs originate from. The paper identifies the complicity of capitalist interest and imperial control as a key factor in the historical involvement of Mercenaries and PMCs on the continent. It argues that the old and the New Scramble are based on the same capitalist ideology that foisted the third world and underdeveloped identity on African Nations. The paper notes the African attempt to redefine these economic and political identities by building new geopolitical alignments within the frame of the 'New Scramble'.</p>
Keywords	
Private Military Companies	
Identities	
Foreign policy	
New Scramble	
Old Scramble	
Mercenaries	
*Corresponding Author:	

INTRODUCTION

The First Scramble and Europe's Foreign Policy Interests

The use of privatised security in modern-day Africa in relation to political or economic control is better understood against the backdrop of the Scramble for Africa. The first scramble of 1884-1885 represented the vanguard to European imperialism and colonization of the continent consequently its ideological underpinnings have remained embedded within the fabric of foreign policy engagements between Africa and the West. This has continued to challenge the political and economic identity of African Nations. Thus an assessment of the 'second scramble' for Africa and the role Private Military Companies are playing in this process requires a brief yet critical review of the ideological facets of the 'first scramble'

The first scramble for Africa was predominantly a European endeavour that played out in the second half of the 19th Century. Ian Phimister has contended in his paper *Africa Partitioned* that the debate in 'Scramble literature' regarding the causes of the scramble has gradually coalesced over economic and political factors.(Phimister, I. 1995). This discourse has been dominated by Robinson and Gallagher's *Africa and the Victorians*, (1961). This work pursues the position that the central causal factors of the first scramble emanated from the continent of Africa itself. The authors cite political crises in Egypt and South Africa as prompts for British intervention by which they intended to secure their trade routes to India.(Robinson&, R. Gallegher, J. 1962) To some extent, they imply that 'British Africa' was perceived as a 'giant footnote to the Indian Empire'.(Robinson&, R. Gallegher, J. 1962) Robinson and Gallagher maintain that this intervention ultimately upset the diplomatic balance of power between Britain and France the dominant European powers in the first scramble.(Phimister, I. 1995).

Although D.K Feildhouse in his work *Economics and Empire* (1973) agreed with Robinson and Gallagher regarding the primacy of political causes, he advanced the position that crucial economic interests were at stake in what he termed 'The imperialism of trade'. Unfortunately he went further to claim that the causes of the first scramble were located in Africa. These interpretations of the scramble according to Phimister 'succeeded in combining anti-Marxist prejudice with the appearance of Africanist agency'. At pains to separate political from economic causes, they defined imperialism politically and explained it peripherally. Hence according to Fieldhouse, 'Europe was pulled into imperialism by the magnetic force of the periphery'.(Feildhouse, D K. 1973) .

The above perception snugly fits the European foreign policy narrative that reinforced 'the civilising mission' agenda of the first scramble and is being resurrected in the second scramble. Authors like A G Hopkins have strongly refuted this narrative by arguing in favour of an economic-induced causality. According to Hopkins the long commercial depression which began in 1870 in Europe and the subsequent conflicts that followed the intensified search for profits and revenue by European powers led ultimately to the French and British Scramble for West Africa.(Hopkins, A G. 1973) Similar to Hopkins's position, Barraclough (1967) maintains that the distinction that Robinson, Gallagher and Feildhouse made between political and economic factors for the scramble was essentially unreal.(Barraclough, G. 1967) He argued that the era of imperialism and the Scramble for Africa was a period in which relations between the state structure and capitalist business were becoming closer. This was because laissez-faire was gradually giving way to acceptance of the legitimacy and necessity of state power to manage economic affairs.(Law, R. 1983).

The Western model of colonialism that followed the scramble merged state and commercial corporations into a single vanguard. Hence imperial and capitalist agendas ran side by side. At this point, It's important to note that Britain has begun a slowly shift towards economic depression as her exports to Europe and the United States fell by 19% in value between 1874 and 1900.(Cain, P J. & Hopkins A.G. 1987) Consequently by 1880 industrial interest in Britain had shifted towards the acquisition of new markets in Asia and Africa. (Cain, P J. & Hopkins A.G. 1987) The acquisition of these markets was facilitated by the increased political instability within African communities that disrupted trade and led European traders to urge their governments to intervene to restore stability.(Phimister, I. 1995) More importantly, the profit margins of most European traders were falling due to the growth of African Middlemen. Hence European interference would enable them to restructure the markets and eliminate the African middlemen thereby monopolising the trade. (Phimister, I. 1995)

The economic precedent described above marked the underlying principles behind the scramble. The involvement of security forces in the form of European armies was engaged to protect the economic interests of the imperial powers. This economic interest represented a critical aspect of European foreign policy objectives at the time of the scramble. It is instructive to observe that in order to

enforce these foreign policy objectives, the principle of a free market system was suppressed in favour of securing trade monopolies all over Africa. As aptly put by Key (1975:96) the Western imperial establishment '...Eschewed the principles of laissez-faire and sought state support for monopolistic privileges...' (Kay, G. B. 1975), the entire colonial period became a testament to this fundamental imbalance in foreign relations between Africa and Europe with the exploitation of Africa as the common denominator to all facets of the engagement. To a large extent, the emergence of mercenary and other private security structures in the post-colonial and decolonization periods was often geared towards securing the interests of these foreign powers.

Geopolitics and the Age of Mercenaries in Post-Colonial Africa

In the 1960 and 70s, the decolonisation process in Africa inadvertently led to protracted civil conflicts in several countries. This created a conducive environment for the initial engagement of mercenaries on the continent during these independence struggles. The widespread use of mercenaries during this period represented the vanguard to the current use of Private Military Companies (PMCs) today. It is instructive to note that the recruitment and use of mercenaries during this period were heavily influenced by the polar divides of the Cold War. Some of the most prominent cases are analyzed below.

The Congo Crises 1960-1965

In the post-independence crises of the Congo in 1961, Moïse Tshombe had amassed a white mercenary army of over 500 when he seceded from the Katanga, a wealthy mineral region. The Irishman "Mad Mike" Hoare and the Frenchman Bob Denard, became prominent commanders of his mercenary army. They created so fearsome a presence that they were dubbed *Les Affreux* ("The Dreadful Ones"). (Axelrod, A. 2014) They prided themselves as being part of the fight to prevent the fall of The Congo into a communist enclave. It is an established fact that the CIA plotted the assassination of Patrice Lumumba the newly elected Prime Minister in 1961 for fear that he would move Congo into the Soviet Bloc. (Axelrod, A. 2014) Central to US foreign policy at the time was 'containment'. The United States was determined to prevent the spread of communism at all cost and Lumumba who was left-leaning had already received weapons and other forms of assistance from the Soviets to help in quenching the crisis in the Congo at that period. At the height of the crisis, the head of the army, Mobutu Sese Seko who was pro-US arrested Lumumba and handed him over to Moïse Tshombe another pro westerner. Under the supervision of Belgian officials, Lumumba and two others were shot and buried in shallow graves. (Britannica 2024).

Although Tshombe's rebel mercenaries were by 1965 subdued by a 20,000-strong United Nations peacekeeping force, (Axelrod, A. 2014) the legacy of Tshombe's mercenary army was a precedent that set a standard for the use of mercenary forces throughout the region in other conflicts. Economic inducement to military interference had already been established earlier in this paper in the analysis of the first scramble. This format was closely remodelled in the case of Katanga and the Congo. It became evident that Tshombe's preoccupation with cultivating Belgian favour was not without connections to the mineral wealth of the region. Katanga's mines were run by a few giant, foreign-controlled companies, the largest of which was the Belgian *Union Minière de Haut Katanga*. (MUHK) (Chasan, D.J. 1964) Tshombe had always worked closely with the Belgian financial interests who ardently supported the secession move. Walter Bruyere-Ostells in his work on French Mercenaries claimed that several sources including a personal letter from U Thant to Paul-Henri Spaak, have established Tshombe's financial complicity to the effect that he is purported to have collected \$35 million for organizing the secession. (U Thant, M.T.S. 1962) This narrative also played out in different degrees in other parts of Africa notably Nigeria, Angola, Rhodesia and other places.

The Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970

The outbreak of the Civil War in Nigeria in 1967 presented yet another opportunity for the interplay of geopolitical forces on the platform of mercenaries to exploit the misfortune of an African nation for economic leverage. In the wake of ethnic killings and violence against the Igbo communities in the North of Nigeria, the Igbo governor of the eastern region of the federation Col. Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu seceded and declared the region a nation named Biafra. The Nigerian State declared a state of emergency and initiated what it referred to as 'Police Action'. Both the Nigerian and Biafran governments subsequently advertised publicly for mercenaries as they faced war. (Axelrod, A. 2014) Western powers were largely divided over which side to support in the unfolding conflict owing to the huge economic potential on both sides. Britain and Russia however supplied weapons to the Nigerian side which included Soviet MiG 15 Jets. (Lanning, M. L. 2005) The Nigerian government promptly contracted a veteran mercenary of the Congo conflicts, John Peters who supplied the pilots needed to fly the MiGs. (Axelrod, A. 2014)

The Biafrans on the other hand contracted American Pilot, Lucien Pickett to fly several weapons caches into Biafra while another pilot, a Swedish aviator Carl Gustaf von Rosen, in collaboration with the French secret service assisted the Biafrans to secretly import five Malmö MFI-9 single-engine airplanes. Rosen even created a mercenary squadron of pilots he named 'Babies of Biafra' who fought against the Nigerian side. (Axelrod, A. 2014) The most prominent mercenary on the Biafran side was a former Hitler youth, Rolf Steiner who later joined the French Foreign Legion, before entering the service of the Biafran government (RFI, 2017) Col Steiner along with Major Taffy, Captain Alec and Captain Paddy put together a 3,000-strong commando Brigade. (Time, 1968) He and his colleagues facilitated the acquisition of weapons and equipment for the Biafran side during the conflict with the secret backing of French officials and the support of Francophone nations in West Africa. (RFI, 2017)

Although the official position of the French government as declared by French Foreign Affairs Minister Maurice Couve de Murville was that the French government was observing a 'complete embargo' the notorious 'Africa Cell' in the presidential palace headed by Jacques Foccart sent a massive cache of weapons to the Biafran side under top secret circumstances. This was a classical example of foreign policy maneuvers made by imperial powers reminiscent of their pre-scramble squabbles over African territories. This is because De Gaulle saw the conflict as a means to weaken the 'Anglophone giant' of West Africa (Nigeria) which was surrounded by former French colonies closely aligned with Paris. Hence *Françafrique*, the centerpiece of French foreign policy towards Africa essentially pursued the defence of French interests at all cost. The Biafran situation thus afforded France the opportunity to weaken and if possible assist in the breaking up of their English rival Nigeria. To this end, the French-based Rolf Steiner owned his central role as the key mercenary to the *Françafrique* policy of the French government. More importantly, French support for Biafra was also rooted in its attempt to break the monopoly of Royal Dutch Shell over Nigeria's Oil Industry. (Hughes, T. 1969)

The Case of Rhodesia

Rhodesia which is now Zimbabwe gained independence from the British as a white-dominated society in 1965. This was partly prompted by agitations from an indigenous Black guerrilla movement supported in part by the Soviet Union. Rhodesia led by Prime Minister Ian Smith, refused to adopt majority rule with a parliamentary representation that would reflect the black majority population of the country. The prime Minister defied diplomatic pressure from the vast majority of African Nations while receiving support from apartheid South Africa which also practised white majority rule. At the outbreak of conflict, the Rhodesian government openly advertised for mercenaries. From an initial force of about 3,000, an influx of mercenaries from Greece, Austria, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, West Germany, Britain and the United States swelled the

Rhodesian force to over 6,000 and by the end of the conflict in the 1979 the force had reached a strength of over 10,000. (Axelrod, A. 2014)

The Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army who fought against the white majority government of Ian Smith received support from the Soviet Union. Consequent upon this the conflict assumed the hue of Cold War rivalry between the West and the Soviet Bloc. The Smith government justified their use of mercenaries by creating the façade of resistance to communism and thus shifting attention away from the oppression of Black African communities.

Mercenaries in Angola, Comoros and Seychelles

The Angolan Civil War began in 1975 and lasted for 27 years. The nature of mercenary involvement in the conflict was less pronounced than that of the Congo, Nigeria and Rhodesia. This conflict was however significant because it became a proxy conflict for the rival Cold War Blocs. The conflict ragged largely between three groups; The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA); The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA); and, to a lesser degree, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). (Axelrod 2014) Another group, the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda. While the MPLA received support from the Soviet Union and China while the United States financed UNITA and the FNLA. Cuban troops and Soviet military aid flowed in for MPLA and in response to this, the United States through the CIA contracted Bob Denard to raise a mercenary fighting force. (Axelrod, A. 2014) Nicholas Mervyn Hall, an ex-convict also raised mercenary recruits from Britain headed for Angola. By and large, all the mercenaries in Angola had either been killed or had deserted by 1975. Bob Denard and Mad Mike Hoare were contracted in the Comoros and Seychelles respectively to engineer changes in government and had varying degrees of success. (Axelrod, A. 2014) The waning successes of individual soldiers of fortune died out with the Denard and Hoare giving rise to a new era of corporate soldiering in the 80's and 90's.

Post-Cold War Era and the Age of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in Africa

In the age of PMSs, Lock, Avant and Singer have argued that the operating model for security intervention by imperial European powers shifted from Cold War alignments to market-based alternatives to providing weak African governments with security goods and services. (Mquirmi, N.E. 2022) However, in our assessment of the historical progression of imperial engagement with market-based economies in Africa, the rule of thumb has been a merger of state and 'capital interest'. As clearly demonstrated in the first Scramble 'capital' invited the 'state' to engage militarily to protect their business interest hence the separation of state foreign policy and that of foreign capital interest in African affairs is nearly impossible. The switch that was orchestrated by the end of Cold War hostilities indeed focused more on market-based strategies but nevertheless still retained a strong connection to the foreign policies of Western nations. This is clearly demonstrated in the growth, development and influx of the new breed of PMCs on the African continent like Executive Outcomes and Sandline International.

Executive Outcomes (EO) represents one of the earliest and most prominent homegrown PMCs that emerged on the continent in the post-Cold War era. Created by Eben Barlow a former SADF officer in 1989. (Axelrod, A. 2014) Executive Outcomes operated with a mixed-race collection of fighters who earned between \$2,000 to \$13,000 per month. Its fighters were largely drawn from SADF soldiers who had lost their place in the South African Military after the collapse of Apartheid. EO was funded by a venture capital and holding company called Strategic Resources Corporation (SRC). This company owned several other security outfits that provided protection in Angola and Uganda. Its exceptional performance in Angola raised its international profile resulting in a lucrative contract with the Sierra Leonean government. (Francis, D. 1999) E.O arrived in Sierra Leone in 1995 and was contracted to provide, military training, logistics, intelligence and combat assistance to the

government. Over a period of 21 months, the government spent \$35,000,000 to engage E.O. (Mquirmi, N.E. 2022) By March the next year, E.O had Pacified the country successfully leading to the Abidjan Peace Accord of 30th November 1996. (Mquirmi, N.E. 2022)

Although the usual Cold War proxy involvement of great powers was conspicuously absent in conflicts on the continent at this time, the Sierra Leonean Civil War became a model of the post-Cold War shift towards a business model that had the state, capital and PMC's closely collaborating to fulfil their distinct interest. This became apparent when the government granted a subsidiary of Branch-Heritage Group mining concessions in Kono Diamond fields shortly after EO secured the fields. It is noteworthy that Branch-Heritage Group was deeply invested in E.O and had secured its services for the government through Tony Buckingham, CEO of the Branch-Heritage Group. (Mathieu, F. and Dearden, N. 2007) It is noteworthy that when the elected government was ousted by another coup in 1997, the Foreign Office of the British government covertly approved the engagement of Sandline International a British PMC to reinstate the ousted government of Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah back to power. An amount of \$10 Million and huge diamond mining concessions sealed the deal in London under the careful supervision of the British government. (Francis, D. 1999) More importantly, the British government tacitly approved the breaching of UN sanctions to enable Sandline to deliver 35 tons of Bulgarian arms and ammunition to the Nigerian-led West African peacekeeping forces ECOMOG. (Mquirmi, N.E. 2022)

The 'New Scramble' and more PMC's

The 'New Scramble' for Africa is a term used to describe the 21st-century competitive rush among global powers to establish and strengthen diplomatic, economic and military ties with African nations in order to gain access to her resources. While the first scramble was dominated by Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Portugal, the players in the new scramble have greatly expanded with the key nations being China, the US, Russia and the Arabs States. The old great powers like Britain and France still maintain their influence but in the face of changing geopolitical dynamics are gradually losing ground to Russia, China and the Arab states. Between 2010 and 2016 a mad rush to establish diplomatic ties saw the opening of more than 230 embassies in Africa, the largest embassy boom ever. (The Economist, 2019) While China has emerged as the biggest arms supplier to sub-Saharan Africa, Russia has signed more than 19 military deals with African states since 2014. Alongside France, China and the United States, Oil-rich Arab states are also making military imprints on the continent by building bases on the Horn of Africa. (The Economist, 2019)

The common denominator between the 'old Scramble' and the 'New Scramble' for Africa remains the control of its natural resources. The method by which imperial powers negotiated these spaces has evolved over the years, however, this paper argues that what has remained constant is the three-fold agreement between state, capital and security. Western governments have worked closely with private capital where need be to invest in the control of natural resources on the continent and have used security provided either by the state as in the first scramble or that which is provided by mercenaries or PMCs in the new scramble. The collision of these three forces is critical to how the scramble will impact the continent. The subject of this paper is to isolate the role of PMCs in this new scramble and its connections to capital and state foreign policy. A brief focal analysis of the major players on the continent, the US, Russia and China will illustrate the issue at stake.

United States PMCs and US foreign policy

A scrutiny of US foreign policy in Africa for the last two decades has revealed a desire for increased military presence on the continent. The failure of US engagement in Somalia in the 90s seemed to have heightened the fact that the less disconnected the population is to a foreign power the likelihood of succeeding in ground missions become low. The US became very wary of intervention and its foreign policy shifted drastically to aid and military assistance. More importantly, the building of

military bases on the continent became a priority thus the creation of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2007 by the Bush Administration. While this has come to be perceived by Africans as an unsettling militarisation of US-Africa relations, (Mesfin, B. 2009; Suksaard et al., 2022) the US claims AFRICOM was chartered to conduct sustained security engagements to promote a stable and secure political environment in Africa in support of U.S. foreign policy. (AFRICOM, 2024) The critics of the programme however argue that it is simply '...part of US grand strategy to achieve three interconnected objectives: ensure US access to African oil, ward off Chinese economic expansionism, and serve the war against terrorism..' (Aning, K. Jaye, T, and Atuobi, S. 2008; Hikmah et al., 2022)

This form of engagement became dominated by PMCs who are more often than not embedded in the military and administrative structures of both the donor and recipient states, and exercise their power and authority within these structures (Aning, K. Jaye, T, and Atuobi, S. 2008; Maniin et al., 2022) This unique model according to Aning, Jaye and Atuobi makes the PMCs 'part of broader structures and agendas and how they facilitate the pursuit of foreign policy by key states' (Aning, Jaye and Atuobi 2008) Essentially this means a subtle integration of PMCs as tools of implementing US foreign policy objectives on the ground in Africa. This was centred on PMCs like DynCorp, the MPRI, and the Pacific Architects Engineers (PAE). The key programmes in which the US used these PMCs include; the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) and the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). (Aning, K. Jaye, T, and Atuobi, S. 2008) These programs are centred on equipment, training and improving capacity to counter-terrorism. As altruistic as this may seem, the true nature of US involvement in Africa is called to question when one brings up the argument of Dick Cheney the former US Vice President who advised that the US should consider the West African 'Oil Triangle' as a future source of reliable oil supply. (Lubeck, P. Watt, M. and LipSchutz, R. 2007) Thus, it stands to reason that the US focus in West Africa is in the Gulf of Guinea where two major oil-producing nations (Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea) are located. Hence Aning's claim '...US military support to Africa through PMCs has strong links with its overall strategic calculations to acquire unlimited access to African oil resources...' receives very strong validation. (Aning, K. Jaye, T, and Atuobi, S. 2008)

Russian PMC's and Russian foreign policy

From the days of the Soviet Union, Russian involvement on the continent has primarily been ideologically motivated. The lack of imperial ambitions by the Russians have consistently encouraged revolutionary and nationalist groups towards seeking Soviet or Russian support. The independence and post-independence conflict that became polarised by the Cold War ideological divide became a testing ground for political alignments with Russia. Although the post Cold War era saw a lull in Russian involvement in conflicts on the continent, it equally saw a rise in the influx of Russian made weapons especially the AK 47 on the continent. This was due largely to the breakup of the Soviet Union and dispersal of its Cold War arsenal. The political economy of PMCs in the 'New Scramble' and a shift in African relations with the West has however changed this dynamic.

The increasing presence of Russian PMCs in Africa has been largely instigated by the massive failure of Western policy towards African Nations. The ouster of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 engineered by the West created security vacuum that Russian PMCs began to fill. Traditionally Russia had developed good relations with Libya especially during the Gadhafi era. Both countries had strong military ties with Russia providing military training, weapons and assistance. (Fasanotti, F.S. 2024) Thus when the central government collapsed the Khalifa Haftar faction naturally turned towards Russia. Like any other great power, Russia had also developed a thriving PMC market, consequently between 2012 and 2019 several Russian PMCs including Moran Security Group, Schit Security Group and Wagner Group were operating in Libya. (Lederer, E.M. 2020)

Arguably Russia's foreign policy towards Libya in the post Gadhafi era was to regain its stronghold in North Africa by propping up its old ally. Before the Libyan Revolution in 2011, Russia cancelled Libyan foreign debt to Russia to the tune of \$4.5 billion in exchange for favorable Russia-Libya trade agreements. The trade deal in question was estimated to be worth \$5 to \$10 billion and would include weapons sales and a contract for the construction of a rail link between Sirte and Benghazi by Russian Railways.(Fasanotti, F.S. 2024; Qie et al., 2023) More importantly Russia needed a strategic base on the Mediterranean and Gadhafi granted Moscow access to the port of Benghazi for its fleet. Since Gadhafi was in a faceoff with the West, Russian strategic presence in Libyan territory provided much needed deterrence from Washington.(Fasanotti, F.S. 2024; Tang et al., 2023)

Apart from Libya, Russian PMCs have been active in Sudan, Mali, Central African Republic (CAR), Niger and Burkina Faso. The most obvious and predominant foreign policy objective of Russian PMCs in almost all these countries is filling the vacuum where Western powers dropped the ball. Amidst the flurry of regime changes that have cut across West and Central Africa, Russian PMCs like the Wagner group have surfaced acting as government go between for securing shifting alliances between these nations and the Russian Federation. The recent expulsion of US and French troops from Niger and Chad after both countries terminated long standing military agreements with the US involving training and counter terrorism in the Sahel region has created huge geopolitical recalibrations in favour of Russia. In the same breath Mali and Burkina Faso have done the same with French troops in their countries.(Copp, T. 2024; Hakeem et al., 2022) The result has been a massive influx of Russian influence with the unveiling of Moscow's Africa Korps in Jan 2024.(Karr, L. 2014) Many analyst have described the Africa Korps as Moscows way of rebranding the Wagner Group after the demise of its leader Yevgeny Prigozhin who had issues with Moscow the year before. Regardless the PMC has emerged as the arrowhead of Russia's strategic diplomacy in the African Sahel. (Karr, L. 2014)

Chinese PMCs and Chinese foreign policy

Unlike the Russians, Americans and other European great powers, the presence of Chinese PMCs on the African continent have advanced a completely different form of diplomacy and foreign policy agenda. Protecting the infrastructure of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative(BRI) has remained the central focus of Chinese PMCs on the continent.(Nantulya, P. 2024; He et al., 2023) The BRI was launched by China's president Xi Jinping in 2013 and it was originally intended to link Asia and Europe through a collection of infrastructure projects that represented the epitome of soft diplomacy. This has however been expanded to include Africa and South America. The need to protect Chinese shipping from pirates and BRI projects in East and the Horn of Africa created the initial precedent for presence of Chinese PMCs in Africa.(ADF 2024; Raharjo et al., 2023) However As the profile of Chinese investments increased, a greater need for security became evident. Several BRI Projects in sub-Saharan Africa produce an income of over \$50 billion in revenue for Chinese companies and with the growing population of over 1million Chinese citizens in High risk African countries that BRI has invested in, the need for security cannot be understated.

Consequent upon this, several Chinese PMCs like Beijing DeWe Security Service, Huaxin Zhong, Overseas Security Guardians and China Security Technology Group have been contracted throughout Africa to provide security for these multi-million dollar projects.(Nantulya, P. 2024) The relationship between these PMCs and Chinese foreign policy is very close indeed. Apart from the fact that the BRI is at the center of Chinas foreign policy drive in the global South, the very status of PMCs within the state structure of China's government does not necessarily identify them as private. China as a party state requires all enterprises to obey party regulation hence a business with two or more employees must retain and operate an internal party structure. More importantly security firms must either be solely owned by the state or at least 51% of company

capital must be state owned. This make Chinese PMCs an extension of Chinese state security structure. (Nantulya, P. 2024)

CONCLUSION

New Geopolitics, New Identities

As stated in the last discourse, the Chinese model of doing business cannot possibly separate State, Security and Capital. All three facets are tightly interwoven using the yarn of party state ideology that needs to thrive on a market economy. As African nations increasingly align with China in a new world order, they must engage with the need to evolve new economic and diplomatic identities. The advancement of BRICS as a global power bloc has cemented the need for this. The question that remains is how will the West recalibrate their diplomatic, economic and security engagements with Africa in the near future bearing in mind these seismic changes.

FUNDING DETAILS

This research was funded by the author.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

This research paper deepens the understanding of Africa's escalating security problems. The contestations of foreign interest over resources has expanded and complicated the engagement of security forces on the continent.

REFERENCES

- ADF, 2024. Africa Defence Forum, China Turns to PMCs to Protect Its Workers and BRI Investments in Africa, <https://adf-magazine.com/2022/01/china-turns-to-pmcs-to-protect-its-workers-and-bri-investments-in-africa/>(Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Africom, 2024. History of U.S. Africa Command, Retrieved 12th June 2024 from <https://www.africom.mil/history-of-us-africa-command>. (Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Aning, Kwesi, Jaye, Thomas and Atuobi, Samuel, 2008. 'The Role of Private Military Companies in US-Africa Policy', *Review of African Political Economy*, Dec., 2008, Vol. 35, No. 118, p, 621
- Axelrod, Alan, 2014. *Mercenaries: A Guide to Private Armies and Private Military Companies*, CQ press 2014.
- Barraclough, G, 1967 *an introduction to contemporary History*. Hammondsworth: Penguin.P. 58:
- Britannica, 2024. How did Patrice Lumumba die?, <https://www.britannica.com/story/how-did-patrice-lumumba-die>. (Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Cain P.J and Hopkins A.G, 1987. "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New imperialism, 1850-1945," *Economic History Review*, XL 1, Feb, 1-26
- Chasan, Daniel J. 1964, Moise Tshombe's Curious Position In the Line-Up of African Leaders, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1964/11/10/moise-tshombes-curious-position-in-the/>(Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Copp, Tara, 2014, US to pull troops from Chad and Niger as the African nations question its counterterrorism role, <https://apnews.com/article/niger-chad-us-troops-withdrawal-russia-aa852a79bac39aaa679af3663b56deaa> (Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Fasanotti, Federica Saini, 2024. Russia and Libya: A brief history of an on-again-off-again friendship, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/russia-and-libya-a-brief-history-of-an-on-again-off-again-friendship/> (Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Feildhouse, David Kenneth, 1973, *Economics and Empire*, London: Macmillan, P. 463;
- Francis, D. 1999, *Mercenary Intervention in Sierra Leone: Providing National Security or*

- Hakeem, R., Azhar, N., & Jahan, M. (2022). Evaluation of Virtual Nutrition Counseling as a Nutrition Care and Educational Tool.
- He, B., & Jiang, L. (2023). To Assess the Social Impact and Legacy of Hosting Major Sporting Events Perceived by Local Residents. *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences*, 21(2).
- Hikmah, Y., Wicaksono, P., Ferezagia, D. V., & Hikmah, I. R. (2022). Analysis of The Understanding Level of The Indonesian Residents to Flood Impacted Insurance Products. *Asia Proceedings of Social Sciences*, 9(1), 239-240.
- Hopkins A. G, 1973. *Economic History of West Africa*. London: Longman.P. 39
- Hughs, Thomas, 1969. Research Memorandum from the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research [Thomas Hughes] to Secretary of State Rogers: USSR-NIGERIA: Bilateral Tensions Increase as War Drags On', April 2, 1969, in FRUS, Vol. E-5, 2005 (53)
- International Exploitation? *Third World Quarterly* 20(2):319–338.
- Karr, Liam, 2024. Russia's Africa Corps arrives in Niger. What's next? Africa file special edition, Apr 12, 2024 - **ISW Press**, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/africa-file-special-edition-russia%E2%80%99s-africa-corps-arrives-niger-what%E2%80%99s-next>. (Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Kay, Geoffrey B, 1975. *Development and underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis* New York St Martin Press, 96.
- Lanning, Michael Lee,2005. *Mercenaries: Soldiers of Fortune, from Ancient Greece to Today's Private Military Companies* (New York: Ballantine, 2005),p 158.
- Law, Robin, 1983. "Imperialism and Partition" *Journal of African History*, XXIV1, win. 101-104.
- Lederer, Edith M. 2020, "UN experts: Libya's Hifter got fighters from Russian company." Associated Press, May 6, 2020
- Lubeck, P., M. Watts & R. Lipschutz , 2007. 'Convergent Interests: US Energy Security and the "Securing" of Nigerian Democracy', International Policy Report, Center for International Policy, February 2007
- Maniin, P., Labua, S., Onsri, K., & Tongsak, Y. (2022). The Effects of Cannabis Breeding Lines on Nutritional Content and Bioactive Compounds in Cannabis Leaves (Cannabis Sativa L.). *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences*, 20(2).
- Mathieu, F., & Dearden, N. 2007. Corporate Mercenaries: The Threat of Private Military &
- Mesfin, Berouk, 2009. The establishment and implications of the United States Africa Command An African perspective, SS Paper 183 • April 2009
- Mquirmi, Nihal El, 2022. Presence of Foreign Fighters: Concessions for Security? *Policy Brief*, N° 12/22, March 2022. Policy Center for the New South. p 8.
- Nantulya, Paul, 2024. Chinese Security Firms Spread along the African Belt and Road, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/chinese-security-firms-spread-african-belt-road/>(Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Phimister, Ian, 1995. Africa Partitioned, Review (Fernand Braudel Center) , *Spring, 1995, Vol. 18, No. 2* (Spring, 1995), pp. 355-381
- Qie, L., Sriwisathiyakun, K., & Petsangsri, S. (2023). A Mobile Blended Reading Circle Model to Improve Primary School Student English Reading Ability and Attitude. *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences*, 21(2).
- Raharjo, E. P., Putra Adidana, I., & Candrarahayu, A. M. (2023). Swiss Cheese Model for Analyzing Freight Car and Bus Traffic Accidents can Lead to the Implementation of Preventive Measures for Traffic Accident Avoidance. *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences*, 21(1).
- RFI, 2017. How France armed Biafra's bid to break from Nigeria, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20170525-how-france-armed-biafras-bid-break-nigeria>(Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)

- Robinson, Ronald & Gallegher, John, 1962. "The Partition of Africa" New Cambridge Modern History XI: Material Problems and World Wide Problems. 1870-1898, 2nd Ed London Cambridge University Press, 593-640
- Security Companies. *Review of African Political Economy*, 34(114), 744–755.
- Suksaard, C., Kuenpetch, K., & Nokkaew, N. (2022). The Development of Kluai Namwa (Musa Sapientum Linn.) Energy Gel: An Alternative Ergogenic Aid for Enhancing Endurance Running Performance. *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences*, 20(2).
- Tang, S., Ratana-Olarn, T., & Petsangsri, S. (2023). Development of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Cloud Education Model to Enhance the Application Ability and Computational Thinking for Undergraduate Students. *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences*, 21(2).
- The Economist, 2019. The new scramble for Africa: This time, the winners could be Africans themselves, March 7 2019, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/03/07/the-new-scramble-for-africa>. (Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- Time, 1968. Biafra: The Mercenaries, <https://time.com/archive/6636472/biafra-the-mercenaries/>(Accessed: 10. 6. 2024)
- U Thant, Maha Thray Sithu, 1962. Letter from U Thant to Paul-Henri Spaak, 1962 August 2nd, Diplomatic Archives of Belgium, carton 18 882/IX.

SHORT BIO

Bernard Fyanka, is the author of *International Patterns of Arms Proliferation: An Evolutionary Assessment and the Imperative for Strategic Control*. He is currently Senior Faculty member at the Department of History and International Studies Redeemer's University Ede. Osun State Nigeria

Abayomi Popoola is a PhD candidate in Department of History and International Studies Redeemer's University Ede. Osun State Nigeria

Segun Ogundeji is a PhD candidate in Department of History and International Studies Redeemer's University Ede. Osun State Nigeria