Title:

Reassessing Private Military and Security Company (PMSC) 'Competition' in Civil War: Lessons from Sierra Leone

Abstract:

This paper challenges recent claims that competitive market dynamics incentivize Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) to fully commit to providing effective services, thereby reducing the duration of civil war. Our assessment of a most-likely case scenario for this argument—Sierra Leone—reveals four critical problems. First, there is rarely direct competition, even if numerous companies are present. Second, the presence of multiple PMSCs usually represents collaboration among subsidiaries providing distinct services, often under the same corporate umbrella. Third, data aggregation obfuscates the overlap of PMSC presence, inflating the amount of perceived competition. Finally, we raise concerns regarding how quantitative analyses can conflate conflict intensity with conflict termination.

Keywords:

Private Military and Security Companies, Civil War, Third-Party Intervention, Conflict Duration, Africa

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Introduction

It is well documented that third parties are regularly involved in civil wars, with scholars reaching varying conclusions of their effects on dynamics such as duration and severity.[i] Some investigations have considered how private military and security companies (PMSCs) have influenced civil conflicts.[ii] Among these, Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski argue that the competitiveness of conflict environments influence PMSCs' goals and effectiveness.[iii] Specifically, the authors develop an opportunity structure argument to explain the conditions which lead market-conscious PMSCs to deliver optimal services. Rooted in assumptions that PMSCs are self-interested, rational, and profit-maximizing, the argument suggests competition amongst PMSCs leads to effective performance to ensure reputational stability and secure future contracts. This effectiveness then translates to shorter conflicts. In contrast, when PMSCs become entangled in an uncompetitive market, poor performance is less costly, and companies may be incentivized to deliberately underperform in order to ensure the continuance of conflict.

While Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski find evidence for this mechanism through a quantitative investigation of 33 large-scale African civil wars from 1990-2008,[iv] we argue that the methods employed are likely insufficient for testing the causal processes. For example, the mere presence of a large number of PMSCs says little about their actual contractual obligations, the specific services they provide, the degree to which they are in competition with each other, and—ultimately—their ability to effectively contribute to conflict termination. We address this shortcoming with an in-depth exploration of PMSC activity in Sierra Leone. This case is useful in that it had a very high level of PMSC involvement, and these PMSCs are widely regarded as having provided effective services. Sierra Leone would thus serve well as a most likely case scenario for testing the purported benefits of a competitive market.

However, the case provides substantial evidence to the contrary. First, PMSCs usually provided limited and distinct services, indicating a lack of competition. Second, when firms do provide similar services, they are specifically due to practical limitations of the assumed competitor. In other words, additional firms are contracted when a single firm is unable to single handedly perform a task. Third, firms were frequently directly collaborating with one another, including a number that were direct subsidiaries of larger firms like Executive Outcomes (EO) or Sandline International. Fourth, utilizing conflict-year as the unit of analysis undermines the ability to observe important within-year interactions (or lack thereof) amongst PMSCs. For example, many companies, though coded as in competition in a given year, were never present in country at the same time and in some cases reflected one company replacing another. Finally, the quantitative coding of conflict termination potentially conflates a variety of potential causal processes, including biasing the results in favor of the competitive argument..

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we briefly review initial concerns with prior findings on the efficacy of PMSCs. Second, we then review literature on PMSCs in civil war, focusing on the validity of quantitative scholarship regarding competition amongst PMSCs during conflict. Third, we provide a general background to the Sierra Leonean conflict in order to put the country's politics and security in context. We then offer our assessment of PMSC activity in the Sierra Leone civil war, paying close attention to the specific services provided by firms, and the degree of their cooperation or collaboration with other firms. We close with a summary of our findings and implications for future research. Our in-depth review of a most likely case scenario frequently invoked by the authors reveals that *collaboration* amongst PMSCs shifted the bargaining process in favor of the government, leading to opportunities for peace.

Prior Explorations of PMSC Effectiveness

The privatization of military and security services is not a new phenomenon.[v] Anecdotes of mercenaries pre-date modern warfare, as evidenced by their appearance in the medieval period, with routiers and cotereaux in 12th century France and even earlier with Greek mercenaries contracted by Persia.[vi] For the African continent, the period during and immediately following decolonization was the heyday for traditional mercenary activity, with notorious *Les Affreux* fighting for Katangan separatists in the Congo and figures such as Bob Denard partaking in a series of coups in Comoros and Benin.[vii] By the end of the Cold War, the reshaping of the industry saw traditional mercenaries supplanted by PMSCs. Their evolution has seen transformation from ad-hoc groups of individual soldiers into highly centralized corporate entities with business models, CEOs, and investors.[viii]

Since the early 1990s, the decision to outsource security to these firms has been quite varied. First, the 'security gap' following the Cold War allowed these firms to fill a void left by foreign powers no longer willing to involve themselves in peripheral conflicts.[ix] Many governments were left to find alternative solutions to offset weak militaries.[x] This trend was accompanied by an increased reluctance by the United Nations to involve itself in ongoing wars, and instead would only intervene when there was some sort of peace to maintain.[xi] For others, a weak military was the result of neglect, as leaders insulated their tenure through coup-proofing tactics.[xii] Peter Feaver famously coined this civil-military 'problematique' in which leaders face a paradox—neglecting the military may increase vulnerability, but investment increases the risk of internal threats to power.[xiii] These factors coalesced to create an opportunity for the private sector to pursue contracts for security services. As Eeben Barlow—founder of Executive Outcomes (EO)—noted, "You cannot keep peace if there is no peace, as we saw in Bosnia. But we [PMSCs] can help a country achieve some form of stability before the U.N. comes in."[xiv]

Early scholarship on PMSCs employed micro-level investigations of mercenary involvement in civil war to understand their effects on military institutions and peacekeeping efforts.[xv] Recent quantitative work has investigated PMSCs' impact on conflict duration, intensity, and government fighting effectiveness.[xvi] For instance, Petersohn found that mercenary and PMSC involvement in civil conflict increases military effectiveness, which contributes to conflict intensity.[xvii] Central to this paper, Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski explore the impact of PMSCs on conflict duration. Investigating all African civil wars between 1990-2008,[xviii] they show wars are shorter in cases where more PMSCs are contracted by a government. The authors argue where multiple companies are operating, they have the incentive to deliver optimal services to retain a favorable reputation and secure future contracts. However, if PMSCs find themselves operating in an uncompetitive environment—the only company or one of a few—poor performance carries lower reputational cost. Thus, the absence of competition incentivizes conflict prolongation. To illustrate the competitive market, Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski commonly reference Sierra Leone. They suggest competition amongst PMSCs led companies to deliver optimal services. We assess these dynamics in the following section.

The Outbreak of War in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone was chosen for two important reasons. First, within Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski's dataset, Sierra Leone saw a significant amount of PMSC activity.[xix] According to their data, twelve[xx] unique PMSCs were contracted by the government between 1991 and 1999, indicating a very highly competitive environment according to the data. Second, the range of services, and effectiveness in delivering them, was particularly notable in this case. The conflict thus presents a most likely scenario for the theoretical processes to be captured.

The arrival of PMSCs in Sierra Leone was ushered in by the country's domestic situation, which involved both the collapse of state institutions and the rise of non-state actors. The patrimonial fourteen-year rule of Siaka Stevens translated into an increasingly prominent role for private interests.[xxi] Swelling levels of corruption throughout Stevens' rule laid the foundation for the eventual war. For example, the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) suffered severely from the policies of Stevens (which continued under Joseph Momoh). Policies aimed to 'ethnicise' the military, coupled with significant budget cuts, led to a defunct security apparatus, thus paving the way for opportunistic PMSCs.[xxii] In addition, early in his tenure, Stevens established the Internal Security Unit (ISU), a Cuban trained paramilitary force as a means to keep the power of the RSLMF in check.[xxiii] While the ISU would be well armed and trained, the RSLMF remained virtually inept.

Along with the ISU, Stevens' fear of military insubordination led to policies which saw the intentional disarming of military units. Coupled with the incorporation of military elites within the civilian government, Stevens' successfully insulated himself from the threat of a coup d'état.[xxiv] By the time his handpicked successor (Momoh) entered office, the RSLMF's officer corps was almost exclusively comprised of Northerners.[xxv] Further, the size and quality of the army was severely deficient. At the time of the RUF's rise, then-president Momoh was forced to respond by increasing the size of the army from 3,000 soldiers to roughly 14,000.[xxvi] This rapid increase resulted in the absence of screening of entrants and a further decline in already limited training and discipline levels. Momoh himself even explained that efforts aimed to augment the military resulted in a "large number of undesirables, waifs, strays, lay-abouts and bandits…in the nation's military uniform."[xxvii]

While Momoh continued to leverage foreign commercial interests in an effort to maintain domestic political power, as his control over revenues waned, he lost the ability to mitigate political opposition. An increasingly disgruntled populous, critical of these corrupt carry-over policies formed a perfect storm that allowed the RUF to attract many Sierra Leoneans, marginalized from the dispersion of benefits under Momoh.[xxviii] These factors, coupled with Momoh's ouster in 1992, ultimately proved to be an immense challenge for the RSLMF and the Sierra Leone government more generally, as the RUF would challenge the government for over a decade.

PMSC Activity in Sierra Leone

Phase I

Corruption, waning revenues, and increasing debts led the government to seek a variety of forms of assistance from private corporations, beginning with the major goal of revenue generation. We briefly summarize the diverse range of companies, and the services they offered, in Table 1. The first PMSC to arrive was the British firm Marine/Maritime Protection Services of Sierra Leone (MPSSL). MPSSL was hired for the prevention of illegal fishing and the collection of fishing royalties.[xxix] MPSSL's contract was heavily supported by the IMF, who selected the firm over the government favored West African Fisheries—a company that had direct ties to President Momoh.[xxx] MPSSL suffered from both from bad press and inadequacies in a legal system which saw only 9 of the 32 vessels it apprehended for illegal fishing prosecuted between 1991 and 1993.[xxxi] Another early entrant was Specialist Services International (SSI), a German firm contracted to provide "customs collection and port security."[xxxii] Like MPSSL, SSI specialized in tasks related to economic security and revenue generation but withdrew from Sierra Leone amidst scandal in 1992, as accusations emerged that the organization was bribing presidential associates for contract acquisitions.[xxxiii]

In terms of competition, these firms were primarily tasked with policing fisheries and collecting customs revenues. These distinctions are important for two reasons. First, it is unclear how these firms could be interpreted as in competition with each other, much less companies providing more direct military services. Second, the incentive to provide effective services—as indicated by conflict termination—would seem to assume greater agency than these firms would likely have had. Figure 1 graphically illustrates these dynamics by considering the services offered by different firms and their time in country. Below, we illustrate that such dynamics extended to a range of different services.

Frontline Security Services (FSS) and Special Protection Services Ltd. (SPS) entered in 1994.[xxxiv] Both companies entered via contracts with mining corporations Sierra Rutile and Sierra Ore and Metal Company (SIERCOM). The success of the RUF in the early 1990s had led these corporations to seek outside security assistance to help maintain control of territory. FSS was responsible for defending upwards of 200 square miles in an effort to secure titanium mines.[xxxv] Both outfits provided the mining companies with enhanced security but were ultimately unable to prevent RUF advances over the breadth of these large territories. While both companies' services centered on the delivery of security, it is unlikely that competition had anything to do with the willingness or ability of these firms to carry out their duties. They were simply not capable of containing the insurgency.

[Table 1 near here]

Phase II

While the initial phase of the war (1991-1994) saw the operation of independent companies with minimal service overlap, an influx of PMSCs occurred in 1995, when five distinct firms were contracted. These firms included Ibis Air International (Ibis), EO, Defense Systems Ltd. (DSL), Gurkha Security Guards (GSG), and Control Risks (CR). Of these firms, Control Risks was the least likely to fit in the competitive narrative as it was involved in primarily risk consultancy and negotiation involving kidnapping and ransom (Davis, 2009, 150). However, continued RUF gains prompted what might be seen as the first real instance of potential competition between firms, when President Valentine Strasser negotiated a contract with Gurkha Security Guards (GSG) to help recover economically valuable territory lost to the RUF.[xxxvi]

Though FSS and GSG could be seen as providing similar services in the same year, both experiments were short-lived. Frontline's operations ceased in January 1995, when rebels kidnapped and took hostage several of the mining conglomerates' employees. Though viewed in the data as overlapping with FSS time-wise, GSG's contract formally initiated later in the month of FSS's departure. If service overlap were identifiable following the FSS exit, it would be most evident when examining the firms EO, DSL, and GSG. Each company's services included force training and mine security, with EO and GSG offering direct military combat services. While theoretically these forces represent the most likely case for a competition mechanism, a closer investigation of the evidence suggests otherwise. First, Petersohn notes that though “GSG and DSL had no ties to EO” they “did not compete in the military segment of the market.”[xxxvii] DSL in particular had attempted to establish itself as a security consultancy firm and disconnect its image from those groups providing military aid, though some reports noted its past collaboration with GSG.[xxxviii] GSG teetered the line between training and direct combat services but was active in Sierra Leone for less than four months. In late February 1995, GSG commander Col. Robert McKenzie, several coworkers, and members of the RSLMF were killed in an ambush. Some accounts suggested rogue members within the RSLMF had tipped off the RUF about GSG’s operations.[xxxix] GSG withdrew in early April 1995.

Though each firm was captured by Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski’s data as present in 1995, FSS, GSG, and EO were not simultaneously operating in-country. The exit of GSG in April 1995 (DSL and CR also left in 1995) ushered in a different network of PMSCs, and at the top sat EO. EO was a South African military firm founded by Eeben Barlow, a former lieutenant colonel in military intelligence and a senior officer in the Civilian Cooperation Bureau (CCB), the latter of which gained notoriety for its tactics against anti-Apartheid efforts (including assassinations).[xl] The company was established in 1989 and originally set out to assist with military intelligence training of the South African Defense Forces (SADF), recruiting heavily from former members of special forces units. With the end of South Africa’s border war and subsequent post-Apartheid downsizing of its military, the company’s priorities shifted. Ongoing wars in Angola and Sierra Leone led to new opportunities for the firm and business boomed in the early 1990s.[xli]

[Figure 1 near here]

With RUF forces bearing down on an insecure Strasser regime, EO was tasked with securing Freetown, reclaiming mining areas overrun by the RUF, and assisting the RSLMF in defeating the RUF. EO’s presence was quickly felt, pushing rebels from Freetown and effectively beating the organization by August 1996. However, this was not accomplished alone.

The competitive lens through which Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski depict the environment in 1995-1996—evidenced by five active PMSCs in each year—theoretically increased the incentive for good performance. In reality, EO utilized business connections to sub-contract and partner with *associated* PMSCs who offered complimentary services, enabling EO to focus on training/combat operations. In short, there was not a competitive market.

These connections can principally be attributed to a complex network of energy and mining corporations known as the Branch-Heritage Group.[xlii] This conglomerate consisted of dozens of companies who had vested interests in mining opportunities in Sierra Leone. EO fell within this network and quickly secured mining territories within the country. Its affiliate, Branch Energy, then solidified a contract for the Koidu mining lease in July of 1995—three months after EO's contract began.[xliii] In essence, EO served as the 'arm' of Branch-Heritage, establishing control over and security of valuable mining interests.[xliv]

Given the lucrative contract that EO obtained,[xlv] one might argue that the firm had an incentive to underperform to ensure conflict continuation and more profits. To the contrary, the firm provided effective services, and their gains in multiple parts of the country prompted them to secure the services of other firms. While EO had trained some 150 soldiers of the RSLMF in assault and capture objectives, they lacked the capabilities and discipline necessary to retain control over these reclaimed territories. For example, as EO continued to cover terrain, they would need assistance in securing these recovered areas. This was especially true in remote areas like Koidu, which was over 300 kilometers from Freetown. Such operations required other services, with Ibis Air, a direct subsidiary of EO, performing services focused exclusively on air transportation.[xlvi] The firm fell under the umbrella of Strategic Resource Corporation (SRC), a holding company established by Barlow himself to manage the web of PMSCs that was situated within the larger Branch-Heritage network.[xlvii] Another company owned by Barlow, LifeGuard Management, was contracted to provide security for reclaimed mining areas, particularly those of the Branch-Heritage Group. EO would similarly sub-contract TeleServices, a firm created by EO during its previous operations in Angola, to assist in mining operations.

Throughout 1996, EO severely degraded the RUF, engaging in a massive onslaught of frontline offenses which pressured Sankoh to the negotiation table. While it would take until November 1996 for the RUF to formally sign a peace agreement, five major offensives executed by EO between May and October 1996 (one of which saw the decimation of RUF headquarters) essentially eliminated the operational capacity of the rebellion.[xlviii] The resulting negotiations would see Sankoh specifically demand EO withdraw from Sierra Leone as part of the conditions of the peace agreement.[xlix] EO would completely shut its doors soon after.

Phase III

According to the Correlates of War (COW) civil war data, 1997 saw the termination of the Sierra Leone civil war as the conflict failed to reach 1,000 battle-related deaths. However, evidence strongly suggests that a number of EO affiliates (i.e. LifeGuard) maintained a presence in the country. For Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski this is not problematic as the COW dataset reverses the warring factions when fighting 'resumes' in 1998.[l] Here, the Kabbah regime is reported as the rebel faction and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)/RUF alliance as the controlling government of Sierra Leone. In reality, the situation was far more complex as Kabbah was not overthrown until May 1997 and was restored to power by March 1998. While replication data contends that no government contracts existed in 1997, 1998, or 1999, it is evident that following the May 1997 coup that Kabbah sought major assistance from a number of PMSCs, most notably Sandline International and its affiliates.

Sandline was widely seen as the "British equivalent to EO."[li] During 1996, Sandline appears to have gotten involved in Sierra Leone due to their close relationship with EO. With the Abidjan Accords formally signed on 30 November 1996, EO was forced to depart the country by January 1997. Sandline subsequently served as the vessel through which EO could still operate. In essence, their services paralleled those of EO and in reality, acted as a way for EO to maintain a presence as pressure mounted for their departure. Sandline's *true* involvement would not occur until after the May 1997 coup which saw Kabbah deposed.

Sandline first emerged in Sierra Leone via a contract with the exiled Kabbah regime. Labeled "…a newer…more sanitized version of EO," the organization was also part of the Branch-Heritage Network[lii] and would use EO's connections to reinforce its efforts in planning a counter-coup to restore Kabbah. It would also go on to assist Pacific Architects & Engineers (PA&E) in their mission with the UN (See Figure 2). In short, the clear corporate links between Ibis Air, LifeGuard, TeleServices, and Sandline continues to undermine any argument of interfirm competition. Instead, this alliance of companies depicts a collaborative network which, when combined with the RSLMF and Kamajors, forced the RUF back to the negotiation table.

[Figure 2 near here]

According to the data, five PMSCs were contracted on behalf of the Kabbah regime from 1998 to 1999 both when in exile and once restored. This includes prior companies, Sandline and LifeGuard, and two new firms, Pacific Architects & Engineers (PA&E) and Cape International Corporation. EO is erroneously coded as present in 1998 in the replication materials; EO exited the country in January 1997, though some members shifted to firms like LifeGuard and its influence would be felt in other ways. With Sandline providing counter-coup services and LifeGuard continuing to offer security to mining interests, Cape International Corporation arose to continue training and support of the Kamajors (members of local hunter communities) and the Civilian Defense Forces (CDF), an anti-RUF militia. The organization was co-founded by three former members of EO. The face of the company, Fred Marrafono, had befriended Chief Samuel Hinga Norman, the coordinator of the CDF during EO's initial campaign. Upon EO's departure, Marrafono, a native Fijian with British citizenship,[liii] used this organization as a way to continue to train the Kamajors and reportedly also acquired a mine security job. PA&E, meanwhile, was contracted to provide logistical support for ECOMOG peacekeeping troops deployed to Sierra Leone, including helicopter support and communication and transportation equipment.[liv] In short, this company did not compete with the EO/Sandline network of firms and was not contracted by the government. Instead it assisted in overrunning the RUF.

Examining the five companies reported as active between 1998 and 1999,[lv] it is clear that while the various companies were contracted by different entities, the central goal of mutual reinforcement and support was uniform. Sandline's contract with the Kabbah regime would complement PA&E's contract aimed to assist ECOMOG peacekeepers. Additionally, Sandline was even reported to have provided tactical intelligence to UN activities in Sierra Leone. Cape International, a spin-off of EO/LifeGuard, would continue training of the CDF. While EO was no longer active (although coded as being present), a number of its members remained with LifeGuard to support mining security. LifeGuard would also be contracted by the UN for relief operations. One additional company overlooked during this time was DSL (acquired by ArmourGroup in 1997), a firm that would solidify a contract with the United National Development Program (UNDP) in 1998 for security of humanitarian aid.[lvi]

Conflicts continue

Our final point shifts our attention to the issue of conflict termination. Within Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski's analysis, two datasets are employed—the Correlates of War (COW) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD), the former focusing on high-intensity conflict. Using these two datasets, the authors find different effects of PMSC presence on the termination of conflict. Specifically, the authors find support for their argument that 'competition' amongst companies breeds operational effectiveness when using the COW definition for conflict termination (when the 1,000 battle-related death threshold is no longer met). Consideration of the ACD dataset's lower fatality threshold (25 battle-related deaths) does not influence the termination of conflict. We argue this conceptualization of termination both conflates the intensity of a conflict with the termination of conflict and points to an important disconnect between the argument and findings.

First, while the Sierra Leone civil war saw a decline in hostilities during two separate peace processes, first with the Abidjan Accords and later the Lomé Peace Agreement, to claim the conflict ended as a consequence of PMSC competition is misleading. Instead, the presence of these organizations appears to have shifted the balance of power amongst warring factions, setting a foundation on which peace could be negotiated, albeit not sustained. Utilizing the 1,000 battle-deaths threshold, the authors coded the conflict as terminating in both 1996 and again in 1999, corresponding with the signing of two peace agreements. However, using the ACD's 25 battle-related deaths threshold, the Sierra Leone civil war is coded as ongoing in both years, not exiting the dataset until 2002. While decisions to opt for various operationalizations of conflict termination are merited, it is clear that adoption of COW's coding would offer strong support for the argument—a large number of companies accompanied termination of the conflict. However, as outlined above, our skepticism of a competitive environment in 1996 and again in 1998 (the years proceeding peace) appears to suggest that a coalition of PMSCs, collaborated to overwhelm the RUF and produce opportunities for negotiations.

Second, the difference in findings between the COW and ACD datasets could actually reflect the more pessimistic argument that these firms are interested more in reducing the severity of violence (and making limited gains like retaking critical terrain) than in ending the conflict. The models specifically indicated that the presence of more firms accompanies a significant reduction in conflicts that reach 1,000 deaths per year but have no influence on terminating lower level conflicts. Stated differently, the presence of more firms is more closely associated with a reduction in conflict severity, not conflict termination. This finding could in fact be indicative of the counterargument that these firms have an incentive to reduce the scale of conflict, but not terminate them, lest they lose their contracts.

Finally, the peace experiments seen in Sierra Leone were short-lived, suggesting that if PMSCs are employed by governments, the sustainability of peace may be dubious.[lvii] EO famously predicted collapse of the Abidjan Accords within 100 days of their departure and Lomé appeared to baffle many observers who saw the agreement as too conciliatory to the RUF.[lviii] Following the failure of Lomé in May 2000, mounting international pressure by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSL) and a host of nation-states saw the RUF forced back to the negotiation table in late 2001 with Kabbah officially declaring an end to the eleven-year war on 18 January 2002. Taken together, the complexities of the various peace agreements, coupled with the absence of competition amongst active PMSCs, leads us to conclude that the war's short-lived episodes of peace were achieved, in part, by a collaborative, not competitive, network of PMSCs.

Conclusions

The close of the Cold War, and the withdraw of superpower support for militaries of the Global South, led to a dramatic increase in the demand for an exhaustive array of security-related services. And while the companies stepping into this dramatically enlarged market were more organized, better resourced, and often directly connected to larger, more legitimate companies, questions regarding the motive and ability of these firms remained. Beyond questions of the ethics and legality of utilizing what many would deem mercenaries, a basic question still remained—could they contribute to peace?

Efforts to answer this question have been varied, and in trying to reach more general conclusions, scholars have implemented large-N analyses that incorporate data on an exhaustive number of cases. One paper in particular, by Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski, took the innovative step of assessing the association between the number of firms documented as present in a conflict arena with conflict termination, ultimately finding that conflicts with higher numbers of PMSCs have significantly shorter civil wars than those with a smaller PMSC presence. The reason for this, they argue, is that a competitive market for security will incentivize firms to perform well in order to avoid losing contracts to competing companies. Though the statistical association appears strong, our analysis challenges this conclusion. While competition over contracts is likely a regular occurrence before firms become involved in civil wars,[lix] once contracts have been attained, the interactions amongst these corporations appear more collaborative. Of the PMSCs involved in Sierra Leone, very few had the capacity and specialization to embark on missions requiring combat-related military services.[lx] With the exception of two companies, Executive Outcomes and its successor Sandline International, the vast majority of PMSCs contracted by the Sierra Leone government are more appropriately categorized as providing services below the “tip-of-the-spear” and had a very limited impact on the conflict.[lxi] Further, the plethora of services offered by the majority of companies contracted included fishery/port security, mining security, intelligence gathering, and military/security training, suggesting minimal, if any, actual competition.

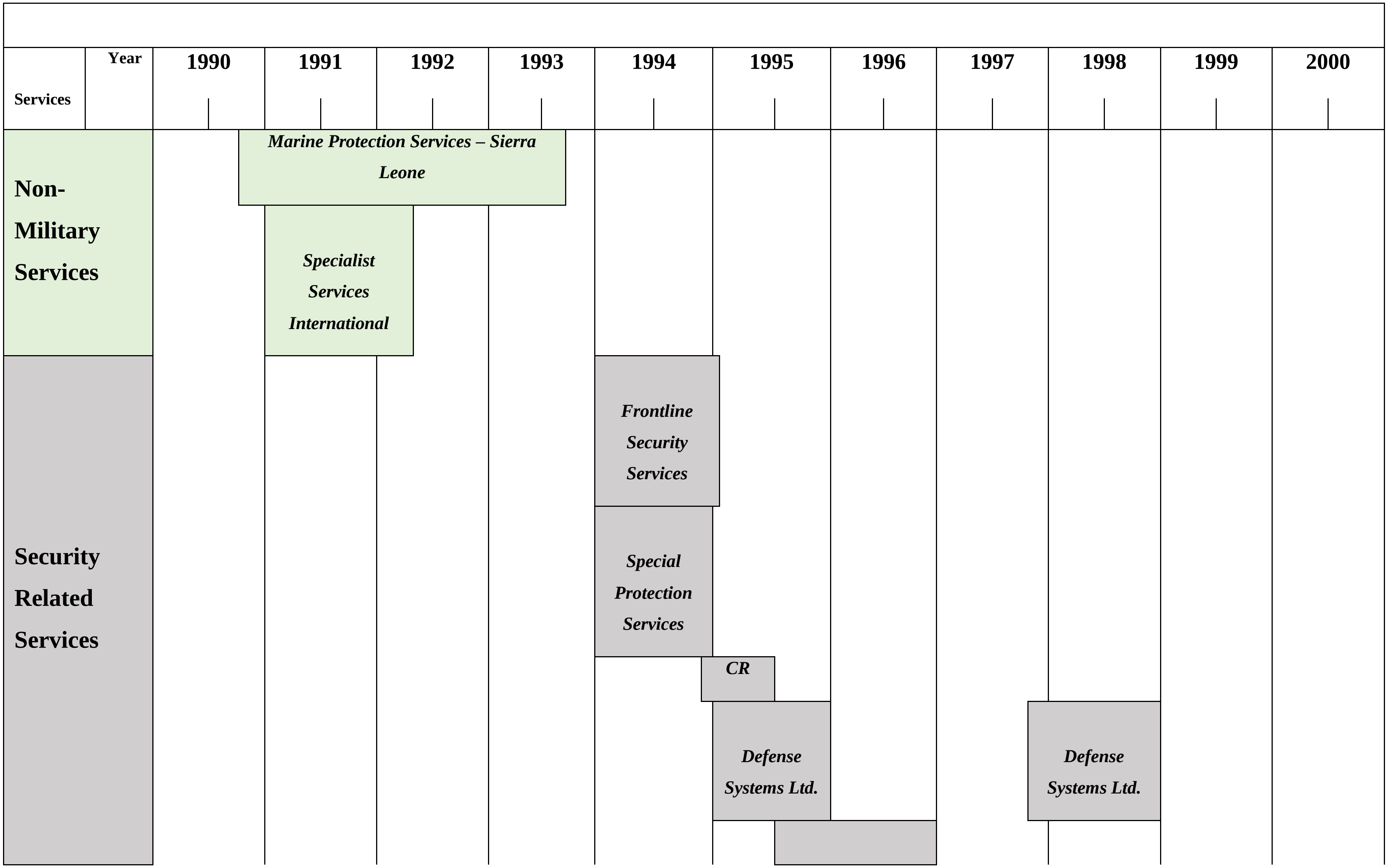
Future scholarship should continue to work towards understanding the interactions amongst PMSCs, both within and outside of conflict. As we have shown, corporate interests largely drove the involvement of PMSCs in Sierra Leone and understanding these relationships more precisely can improve scholarship on PMSCs’ effects on war. As the global employment of PMSCs continues to rise, lessons of wars past should be heeded to understand the conditions that lead to their successful employment.

Table 1. Private Military and Security Companies in the Sierra Leone Civil War

Company Name	**Service Provisions**
Specialist Services International	German firm providing customs collection and port management for revenue generation.
Marine/Maritime Protection Services	British firm hired to police and prevent illegal fishing and collect fishing royalties for revenue generation.
Frontline Security Services	Hired by Sierra Rutile and Sierra Ore and Metal Company (SIEROMCO) for the protection of area that had been leased for mining.[lxii]
Special Protection Services Ltd. *(Special Project Services Ltd.)*	Approached by Sierra Rutile and SIEROMO for the protection of their interests in Sierra Leone following the GSG's failure. *no conclusive evidence that a contract was actually signed.
Gurkha Security Guards	Security for mining company Sierra Rutile in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Government. Provided training services for officers and cadets of the RSLMF.[lxiii]
Executive Outcomes	Frontline combat operations and military training.
Ibis Air International	Provided EO air service during its campaign in Sierra Leone.
LifeGuard Management	Protection of diamond mines in Sierra Leone – owned by Barlow – part of the EO conglomerate. Transferred tasks to Sandline in January of 1998.
Teleservices	Angolan security firm hired by EO for mine security. Developed by EO in Angola.

Control Risks; Group 4	Security company focused on consultancy for risk assessment. Worked with mining companies/PMSCs on situations involving kidnapping and ransom.
Defense Systems Limited	Early activities included mine security and guard management. Later, acquired by the US firm ArmourGroup International and contracted by the UN for support and security. Advertised "it 'never gets involved in other people's wars. It's simply not an aspect of our business…We want to establish clear blue water between us and mercenary firms. "[lxiv] *Had recommended Sandline to Papua New Guinea Government.
Sandline International	Provided combat operations for the deposed Kabbah regime for a counter-coup. Significant links to EO.
Pacific Architects & Engineers	Logistical support for ECOMOG peacekeeping troops in Sierra Leone.
Cape International Corporation	Co-founded by Fred Marrafono and two other former members of EO. Marrafono who had befriended Chief Samuel Hinga Norman, Coordinator of the Civilian Defense Forces (CDF), used this organization as a way to continue to train the Kamajors following EO's departure. The company is also rumored to have contracted with a mining company (Golden Prospect Mining Company) to provide security.[lxv]

Figure 1. PMSCs' Service Provisions in Sierra Leone



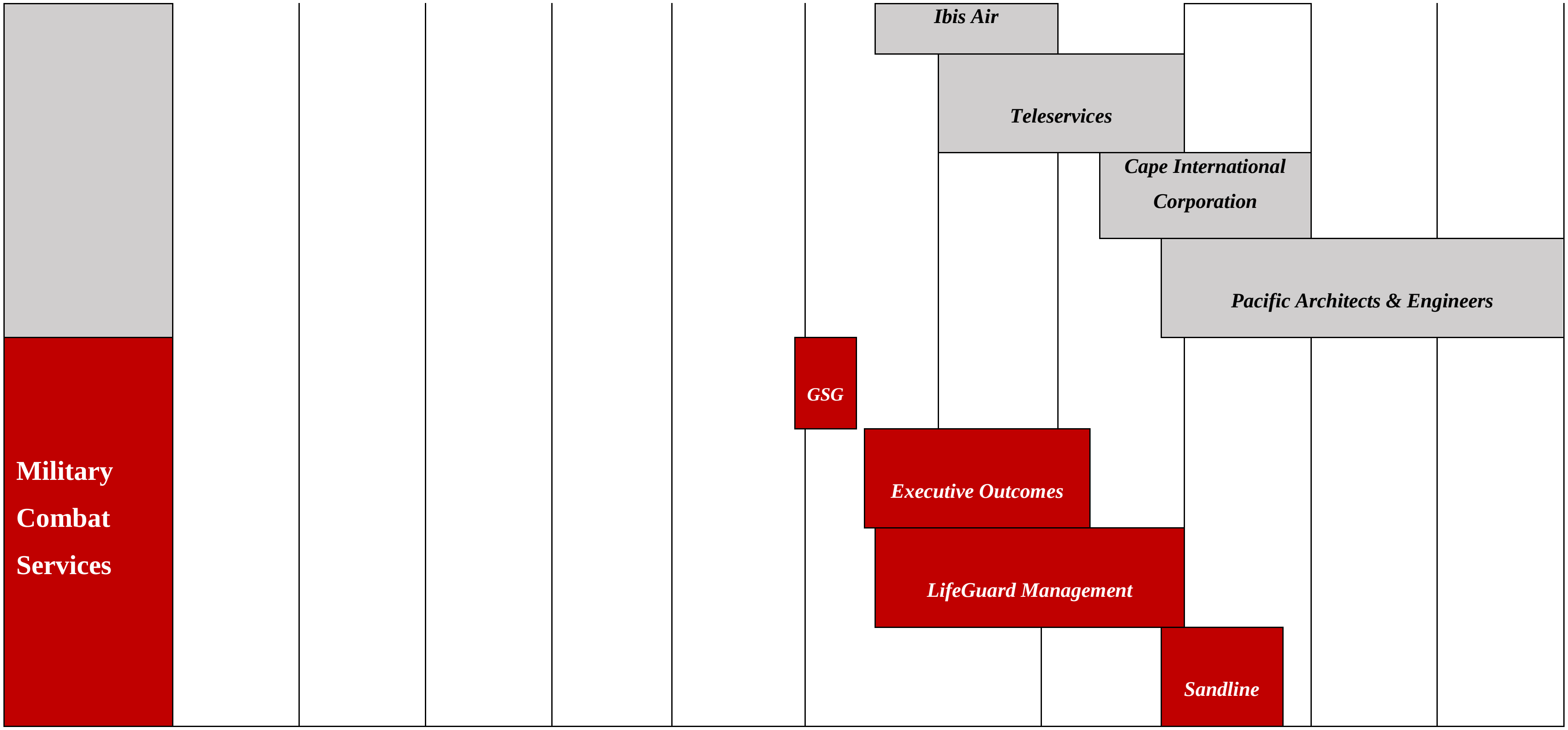
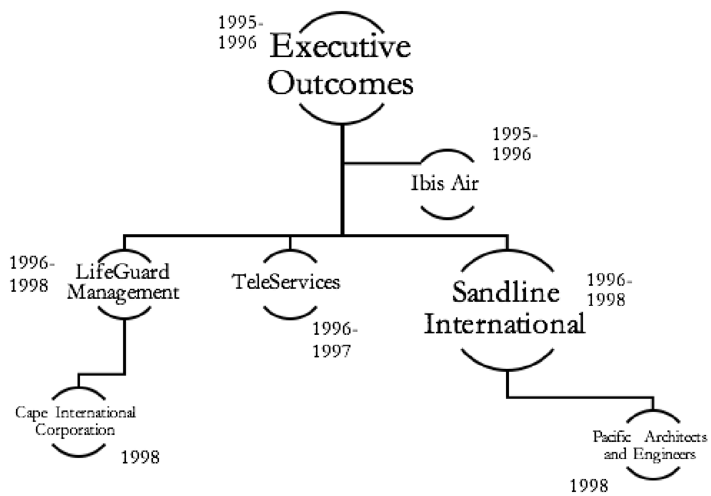

Ibis Air
Teleservices
Cape International Corporation
Pacific Architects & Engineers
GSG
Military Combat Services
Executive Outcomes
LifeGuard Management
Sandline

Figure 2. PMSC Connections in Sierra Leone



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Endnotes

[i]Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce, "Third-party Intervention."; Carment and Rowlands, 'Three's Company: Evaluating third-party."; Regan, 'Third-party Interventions and the Duration."

[ii] Douglas, "Fighting for Diamonds,"; Francis, "Mercenary intervention in Sierra Leone."; Aning, Jaye, and Atuobi, "The Role of Private Military,"; Petersohn, "The Impact of Mercenaries,"; Petersohn, "Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs)."

[iii] Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski, "Private Military Companies."

[iv] Large-scale refers to the Correlates of War (COW) operationalization of 1,000 battle-related deaths annually.

[v] Adams, "Private Military Companies: Mercenaries."

[vi] Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of*,"; Musah and Fayemi, "Introduction."

[vii] McGowan, "African Military Coups d'état, 1956-2001."; Nossal, "Roland Goes Corporate."

[viii] Mandel, "The Privatization of Security."

[ix] Singer, *Corporate Warriors.*

[x] Reno, "African Weak States."; Kinsey, "Problematising the Role."

[xi] United Nations, "Brahimi Report."

[xii] Powell, "Trading Coups for Civil War."

[xiii] Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations."

[xiv] Rubin, "An Army of One's Own."

[xv] Arnold, *Mercenaries.*; Hough, "A Study of Peacekeeping."

[xvi] Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski, "Private Military Companies."; Petersohn, "The Effectiveness of Contracted Coalitions."; Petersohn, "The Impact of Mercenaries,"; Petersohn, "Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs)."

[xvii] Petersohn, "The Impact of Mercenaries,"; Petersohn, "Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs)."

[xviii] The authors use COW and the Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD) to capture these conflicts.

[xix] Sierra Leone contracted the second highest number of PMSCs, second only to Angola.

[xx] It is important to note potential issues with data on PMSCs involved in the Sierra Leone civil war in the replication materials. First, no companies appear to be operating in Sierra Leone in 1994 when examining the replication data that employs the COW dataset. However, it is clear that at least one company was active (and likely two; see Figure 1). On the contrary, replication files employing the ACD, reports two contracted PMSCs in 1994. Thus, while we note the authors code a total of twelve unique companies operating during the conflict, our reading of the case identifies at least fourteen PMSCs as conducting operations during the civil war.

[xxi] Kpundeh, *Politics and Corruption in Africa*, 23.

[xxii] Howe, "Private Security Forces," 314

[xxiii] Fyle, "The Military and Civil," 129; Kposowa, "Erosion of the Rule," 39.

[xxiv] Fyle, "The Military and Civil," 129.

[xxv] Kandeh, "Ransoming the State," 363.

[xxvi] Ibid

[xxvii] Ibid

[xxviii] Reno, *Corruption and State Politics*, 166.

[xxix] Reno, "Ironies of Post-Cold War," 11-12.

[xxx] Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 122.

[xxxi] Turay, "Fisheries Management Privatization."

[xxxii] Reno, *Corruption and State Politics*, 167.

[xxxiii] We identified some discrepancies with the coding of contract initiation within replication files. As an example, MPSSL is coded as arriving in Sierra Leone in 1992 and only remaining for that year. In reality, MPSSL arrived in 1990 and exited Sierra Leone in 1993. Secondly, SSI, while accurately coded as arriving in 1991, is only reported as active in one year. However, the company exited in early 1992. Thus, while replication files suggest that no companies were simultaneously operating in Sierra Leone between 1990-1993 our reading of the case illustrates overlap in the duration of at least two companies' contracts and this trend is evident throughout the remainder of the case.

[xxxiv] Vines, "Gurkhas and the Private Security," 131-132; In addition, accounts suggest SPS never fully committed to a contract with the mining corporations due to the high risk of failure in Sierra Leone.

[xxxv] Reno, “Ironies of Post-Cold War,” 12.
[xxxvi] Musah, “A Country Under Siege,” 87.
[xxxvii] Petersohn, “The Social Structure,” 277.
[xxxviii] Vines, “Gurkhas and the Private Security," 134.
[xxxix] Musah, “A Country Under Siege,” 87-88.
[xl] Reno, “African Weak States.”
[xli] Pech, “EO-A Corporate Conquest,” 84.
[xlii] For a thorough discussion of the connections amongst firms see O’Brien, “Private Military Companies.”
[xliii] Ibid, 65.
[xliv] The EO/Branch relationship is an important, albeit, perplexing entanglement of a variety of corporate entities. For a thorough discussion of the complexities of the commercial network of companies see Pech (1999).
[xlv] Estimates suggest EO’s contract was approximately $2 million per month along with resource concessions. For additional details on EO’s contract see Douglas (1999) and Howe (1998).
[xlvi] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 104.
[xlvii] Pech, “EO-A Corporate Conquest.”
[xlviii] Hough, “A Study of Peacekeeping.”
[xlix] Douglas, “Fighting for Diamonds.”
[l] Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski, “Private Military Companies.”
[li] Pech, “EO-A Corporate Conquest,” 93.
[lii] Ibid.
[liii] This is important to note as South Africa outlawed mercenary activity by their own nationals. As a British citizen, Marrafono was not bound by the same legal regulations as the South Africans. (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/fred-marafono-south-pacific-warrior-whose-heart-belongs-in-sierra-leone-2306013.html).
[liv] Kargbo, *British Foreign Policy*, 156.
[lv] As noted, no ‘government contracts’ are reported in 1998 as the dyad flips in the COW dataset. However, Kabbah was restored to power by April of 1998.
[lvi] Østensen, “UN Uses of Private Military,” 26.
[lvii] Faulkner, “Buying Peace.”
[lviii] Alao and Ero, “Cut Short for Taking,”; Reno, “No Peace for Sierra Leone.”
[lix] Tkach, “Private Military and Security Companies.”
[lx] Heinecken, “Outsourcing Public Security,” 628.
[lxi] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*.
[lxii] Reno, “Ironies of Post-Cold War,” 14.
[lxiii] Musah, “A Country Under Siege,” 88-89.
[lxiv] Vines, “Gurkhas and the Private Security,” 184.
[lxv] Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “Chapter One, Mineral Resources.”