

Yet it is when the service spectrum and the typological models discussed are contrasted that it is possible to raise the question where the distinctiveness of private military services lies, which distinguishes the PMC from other commercial entities. The distinctiveness of PMC services lie at a basic level, both identifiable in the typologies of services noted above and the PMC service spectrum. The military expertise easily identifiable in services that involve skills applicable to combat or combat support, i.e. 'active' services, is always latent in the offering of 'passive' services, e.g., training or support.² It is important to remember that an important proportion of PMC personnel are former military personnel from well-trained forces. The military expertise of the former soldier, or the seasoned law enforcement officer, is contained in both the active and passive services offered by PMCs. This expertise is actively used or can be potentially used by PMC personnel depending on the degree of hostilities of the particular location where a PMC is deployed and the type of services rendered to clients. The military and security expertise originates not in the state, but a private firm: the PMC. Thus, the expertise belongs to a private firm which profits from its active or potential use in the international market.

3 Defining the Private Military Company

In light of the preceding discussion, Private Military Companies can be defined as legally established multinational commercial enterprises offering services that involve the potential to exercise force in a systematic way and by military means and/or the transfer or enhancement of that potential to clients. The potential to exercise force can materialize when rendering, for example, a vast array of protective services in climates of instability (on land and sea). Transfer or enhancement, on the other hand, occurs when delivering expert military training and other services such as logistics support, risk assessment, and intelligence gathering. It is a 'potential' to exercise force because the presence of a PMC can deter aggressors from considering the use of force as a viable course of action.³ PMCs also offer services that do not involve the potential to exercise force. These include training in non-conflict environments, and management and/or maintenance of strategic facilities, transport, and communications infrastructures. Still, the delivery of such

2 In the academic debate, these 'active' and 'passive' distinctions have been used by O'Brien (2000).

3 Alex Duperouzel, founder of Background Asia Risk Solutions, e.g., comments that the strategy of his company is "based around the idea of deterrence. We are trying to tell people that we are armed and serious and that there are easier targets elsewhere." (cited in Harris/Fidler 2005)