
For anyone interested in the role of Private Military Companies (PMC) and the problems they raise in today’s international environment, this book must find a place on their library shelf. The title gives a clear idea of the book’s scope and the ground it covers. The book is divided into four main parts (Concerns, Challenges, Norms, Markets), which try to answer four sets of questions explicitly outlined in the introduction: What is the basis and nature of the concerns raised by the PMC phenomenon? How have problems leading to a call for regulation been manifested in different regions and contexts? What regulatory norms and institutions currently exist and how effective are they? What role does the nascent market for private security and military services play in regulation, and where is it going?

The “Concerns” section includes a moral view that could provide a different perspective from which to examine the regulation of the private security industry. It also outlines the key issues in PMC activities leading to the question of what should and what should not be regulated. It points out that, while elaborate regulatory frameworks cover the role of armed forces, no equivalent has been developed to cover the role of PMCs in shaping security and politics. The “Challenges” section refers to three case studies: Africa’s experience with mercenaries and PMCs and the challenges posed by their regulation, particularly in light of the role they have sometimes played in supporting less-than-democratic regimes; the increased reliance on PMCs in Iraq and the problems this poses in terms of oversight and accountability; and the challenges posed by the involvement of PMCs in military assistance and security sector reform. The “Norms” section includes an examination of PMCs under international humanitarian law, that is an assessment of existing law and its application to PMCs. It looks into the responsibility of the state for the conduct of private actors, considering that the state hires, licences and permits the activities of PMCs, and analyses the national systems in the United States and South Africa regulating the sale of private contract military and security services abroad. Finally, the “Markets” section deals with the emerging market for private military services, the problems of regulating it and the efforts being made to find a solution. It also looks into whether or not states
should handle their own security or buy it on a global market, and the related principal/agent theory which could offer a useful framework for a comparative analysis; as well as the role that contracts can play in the military privatisation arena and the numerous objections to such contractual provisions. It is argued that only a multi-dimensional approach can achieve a reasonable degree of regulation of the private security industry. In conclusion, this very rich and interesting book covers the most important issues concerning the expanding role of private security and military companies in international affairs. (M. Cre.)