

# The US Military Empire and the “Privatization of War”: Private Military and Security Contractors in the Service of the Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC)

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*Globalization of trade and central banking has propelled private corporations to positions of power and control never before seen in human history. Under advanced capitalism, the structural demands for a return on investment require an unending expansion of centralized capital in the hands of fewer and fewer people. The financial center of global capitalism is so highly concentrated that less than a few thousand people dominate and control \$100 trillion of wealth.*

The few thousand people controlling global capital amounts to less than 0.0001 percent of the world's population. They are the transnational capitalist class (TCC), who, as the capitalist elite of the world, dominate nation-states through international trade agreements and transnational state organizations such as the World Bank, the Bank for International Settlements, and the International Monetary Fund.

The TCC communicates their policy requirements through global networks such as the G-7 and G-20, and various nongovernmental policy organizations such as the World Economic Forum, the Trilateral Commission, and the Bilderberger Group. The TCC represents the interests of hundreds of thousands of millionaires and billionaires who comprise the richest people in the top 1 percent of the world's wealth hierarchy.

The TCC are keenly aware of both their elite status and their increasing vulnerabilities to democracy movements and to unrest from below. The military empire dominated by the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) serves to protect TCC investments around the world. Wars, regime changes, and occupations performed in service of empire support investors' access to natural resources and their speculative advantages in the market place.

When the empire is slow to perform or faced with political resistance, private security firms and private military companies (PMC) increasingly fulfill the TCC's demands for the protections of their assets. These protection services include personal security for TCC executives and their families, protection of safe residential and work zones, tactical military advisory and training of national police and armed forces, intelligence gathering on democracy movements and opposition groups, weapons acquisitions and weapon systems management, and strike forces for military actions and assassinations.

The expanding crisis of desperate masses/refugees, alienated work forces, and environmental exhaustion means an unlimited opportunity for PMCs to engage in protection services for the global elite.

Estimates are that over \$200 billion a year is spent on private security employing some fifteen million people worldwide. G4S is the largest PMC in the world with 625,000 employees spanning five continents in more than 120 countries. Nine of the largest money management firms in the world have holdings in G4S. Some of its more important contractors are the governments of the UK, the US, Israel, and Australia. In the private sector G4S has worked with corporations such as Chrysler, Apple, and Bank of America. In Nigeria, Chevron contracts with G4S for counterinsurgency operations including fast-response mercenaries. G4S undertakes similar operations in South Sudan, and has provided surveillance equipment for checkpoints and prisons in Israel and security for Jewish settlements in Palestine.

Another private military contractor Constellis Holdings—formally Blackwater and Triple Canopy—is a leading provider of security, support, and military advisory services to the US government, foreign governments, multinational corporations, and international organizations. Constellis is managed by an all male board of directors including billionaire Red McCombs; John Ashcroft, the former attorney general; retired admiral Bobby Inman; and Jack Quinn, a leading Democratic advisor who served as chief of staff to vice president Al Gore and as counsel to President Clinton.

Hundreds of private military contractors now play an important role in TCC security in the evolving 21<sup>st</sup> century neo-fascist corporate world. Capital will be free to travel instantly and internationally to anywhere that profits are possible, while nation-states will become little more than population containment zones with increasingly repressive labor controls. For these reasons, PMCs must be understood as a component of neoliberal imperialism that now supplements nation-states' police powers and could eventually substitute for them.

The trend toward privatization of war is a serious threat to human rights, due process, and democratic transparency and accountability. The US/NATO military empire sets the moral standards for denial of human rights by using pilotless drones to kill civilians without regard for international law in various regions of resistance to empire. Labeling dead civilians as insurgents and terrorists, the complete lack of due process and human rights belies any standard of governmental moral legitimacy. This lack of moral legitimacy in turn sets standards for private military companies to operate with much the same malice in the shadow of the empire.

The globalization of PMC operations alongside transnational capital investment, international trade agreements, and an increasing concentration of wealth in the TCC means that the repressive practices of private security and war will inevitably come home to roost in the US, the European Union, and other first-world nations.

The 99 percent of us without wealth and private police power face the looming threat of overt repression and complete loss of human rights and legal protections. We see signs of this daily with police killings (now close to a hundred per month in the US), warrantless electronic spying, mass incarceration, random traffic checkpoints, airport security/no-fly lists, and Homeland Security compilations of databases on suspected resisters.

Each time we look past the crimes of the empire we lose a portion of our integrity of self.

Ignoring repression becomes part of continuing compromise in our daily lives leading to a moral malaise and increased feelings of helplessness. We must stand up and demand democratic transparency and the international enforcement of human rights. Unless we collectively challenge the empire, we face a world that is evolving into a new dark age of neo-feudal totalitarianism unlike any previously known.

*Peter Phillips is a professor of Sociology at Sonoma State University and president of Media Freedom Foundation/Project Censored. For a longer footnoted version of this report see:*

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