

## Naval War College Review

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Volume 69  
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 15

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2016

# Outsourcing Security: Private Military Contractors and U.S. Foreign Policy

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### Recommended Citation

Stanley, Bruce E. and Bralley, Neal H. (2016) "Outsourcing Security: Private Military Contractors and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 69 : No. 2 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol69/iss2/15>

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The construal level theory consists of several key components. The more distant our goals, the greater we construe the long time horizon abstractly. The more immediate our goals, the greater we construe the short-term horizon in detail. Consequently, the *desirability* of distant goals can overshadow their *feasibility*. National leaders who formulate lofty goals for the distant future support *transformative* objectives, while those who focus on the particulars of combat operations tend to be preoccupied with a *maintenance* outlook that is far more cautious about future estimations. Proponents of desirability and transformative strategies for peace display deductive reasoning based on preexisting concepts, whereas advocates of feasibility and maintenance approaches demonstrate *inductive* thinking sensitive to context-specific information. Undergirding these processes in strategic assessments, the construal level theory presupposes the dynamic of communication fluency. In other words, civilian and military leaders' predispositions toward either desirability or feasibility will determine the flow of information and whether the incoming data are accepted or rejected.

Rapport suggests that the semantics of "postwar" be reformulated. The semantics of "post" makes reconstruction endeavors more of an afterthought, and the "post" verbiage buys into a sequential scheme of arranging operations instead of a fluid model of cooperative interaction. From this descriptive analysis, he offers a prescriptive remedy to the problem: instead of sequencing or paralleling phases of the total operation, he suggests overlapping the coordination of waging war and planning peace so as to harmonize stabilization considerations with

kinetic aims. To that end, greater joint agency collaboration between military and civilian leaders—both desirability visionaries and feasibility organizers—must take place for abstract ends and concrete means to synergize in the range of military operations. By bringing the *why* of desirability and the *how* of feasibility together through interagency cooperation, U.S. presidents and their senior advisers will be better equipped to win the peace, and not simply the war, through a continuum of joint operational planning.

Overall, Rapport's use of construal level theory for understanding the gap between *jus in bello* and *jus post bellum* is persuasive. Readers must decide whether this particular theory assumes too great a role in explaining the lack of correlation between war fighting and state building and, in the process, minimizes the cultural, political, and economic factors that frame the context and motivate the power brokers of a given historical period. For scholars and students, policy makers, and warfighters, Rapport's interdisciplinary work in history, international policy, and psychology is a fascinating study worth the time and money to read and heed.

EDWARD ERWIN



*Outsourcing Security: Private Military Contractors and U.S. Foreign Policy*, by Bruce E. Stanley. Lincoln, Neb.: Potomac Books, 2015. 238 pages. \$25 (paperback).

Bruce Stanley, a retired Army officer and professor at the United States Army's School of Advanced Military Studies, has written a detailed and well-documented

volume on the recent use of private military contractors by the United States Department of Defense and their utility. He has done this by taking a scholarly, microeconomic approach to assessing how and under what conditions the military has most recently employed private military contractors within the context of overall U.S. foreign policy.

While Stanley begins with a clear, easily understandable introductory discussion of what private military contractors are, how they differ from mercenaries, and why they are valuable to the U.S. military today, he later delves into the microeconomic model's concept of supply and demand as it relates to private military contractors within theaters of operation. He provides all the economic, mathematical, and statistical modeling and analysis that a postgraduate student might desire. However, readers who have a "diminishing marginal utility" for the nuances of academic economics may safely bypass the in-depth mathematical discussions and proceed to his qualitative discussion of this subject.

Stanley's book looks at four recent U.S. military engagements, each of which saw the use of private military contractors: DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM (1990–91), Bosnia (1995), U.S. operations in Afghanistan (2001 to very nearly the present), and U.S. operations throughout the Iraq war (2003–12). He examines the similarities between these engagements, the existing demand for the contractors' services, and how the various contracted providers were able to supply those services for the Department of Defense.

Stanley maintains a balance in his examination of the use of contractors in the performance of our military's mission. He does not delve into the oft-heard

complaints from many in uniform that contractors are solely in the business to make money. Frankly, all business entrepreneurs are in business to make a profit; it is a crucial part of the very fabric of America. Profit is the entrepreneur's reward for assuming risk within the marketplace. Indeed, the protection of capitalism is among the fundamental reasons our armed forces exist. This suggests a tolerant view of those engaged in business in general; and private military contractors in particular share substantial risk to life and limb to support our armed forces. Since the end of the Cold War, the Department of Defense has successively and significantly reduced the numbers of active-duty personnel. While the numbers of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines have fallen, the mission requirements of our armed services have not diminished. As a result, in an effort to use our uniformed service members in the business of actual combat tasks, the Department of Defense and its subordinate military departments and combatant commands have resorted to using contractors to provide the many logistical and other supporting service tasks necessary to support their combat operations.

Stanley's study includes the sobering numbers of civilian military contractors wounded and killed in these various theaters. Over certain periods, the casualty numbers experienced by some private military contractors closely mirrored those experienced by soldiers. His book provides a deeper understanding of the very real risks these companies and their employees have faced in the support of our deployed service members.

The United States has successfully conducted recent and current military operations to support our foreign policy.

Readers should note that doing so requires us to maintain both a sufficient number of uniformed armed forces personnel and a treasury sufficient to fund both military operations involving soldiers conducting extended combat operations anywhere in the world and the significant expense of hiring private military contractors to perform the support services necessary to enable them. This economic model, while currently feasible and tenable for the United States as a wealthy nation, may not work for another nation with more-constrained resources. In the future, while the “demand” may be there and the “supply” of contractors may still exist, if a nation does not have the financial resources to pay for those contracted services, this model might not work.

*Outsourcing Security* is a valuable read for military and civilian defense professionals. Stanley applies a thoughtful analysis to what many may have thought they understood, and his work brings both depth and academic merit to the topic.

NEAL H. BRALLEY



*Success and Failure in Limited War: Information & Strategy in the Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf & Iraq Wars*, by Spencer D. Bakich. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2014. 344 pages. \$35 (paperback).

This groundbreaking treatise by Dr. Spencer Bakich, visiting lecturer in political science at the University of Richmond, endeavors to explain America’s mixed success with limited war since 1950 by way of a new theoretical approach to analyzing policy-strategy formulation and execution at

the highest levels of government. For the purposes of his theory, Bakich characterizes limited wars as those fought at a high level of intensity for limited aims but whose outcomes “are of a considerable consequence for the states involved and for the broader international system.” Furthermore, restraint is necessary to avoid escalation—a tendency of limited wars. Not surprisingly, Bakich focuses his analysis on four preeminent case studies from the “American century”: the Korean War; the Vietnam War; the Persian Gulf War (Operation DESERT STORM); and the Iraq war (Operation IRAQI FREEDOM).

The book’s first two chapters are largely theoretical. Bakich points out how established approaches such as “rationalistic strategic choice theory” and the “foreign policy decision making (FPDM) school” cannot fully explain how information influences strategy, or its outcome, in war. He argues that organizational theory does not capture the true nature of relationships between strategic leaders and national security organizations. As Bakich writes, “A gap remains in our understanding of the sources of strategic success in [limited] war.”

To bridge this gap, Bakich confidently posits his “information institutions” approach. Simply put, it is the pattern of information flow between those at the apex of power and their national security organizations that predisposes states to success or failure in limited war. The information institutions approach suggests that top decision makers served by an information-rich and densely networked national security apparatus should have a better grasp of the strategic environment and experience greater military-diplomatic coordination in planning and execution, significantly