

# **The Anti-Mercenary Norm and United Nations' Use of Private Military and Security Companies: From Norm Entrepreneurship to Organized Hypocrisy**

*Oldrich Bures  
Eugenio Cusumano*

**Abstract:** A prominent antimercenary norm entrepreneur in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the UN has become an equally prominent of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this article, we explain the gap between UN talk and action on private providers of security as a form of organized hypocrisy. To map the mismatch between UN rhetoric and behaviour in a measurable fashion, we combined official data on the use of PMSCs services and a content analysis of the reports written by the UN Working Group on mercenaries, whose very negative portrayal of PMSCs stands in stark contrast with the widespread use of PMSCS by UN agencies and peacekeeping missions.

Although a decoupling between talk and action often an inevitable response for organizations struggling to simultaneously pursue contradictory objectives, our findings have important implications for the debates on UN norm entrepreneurship, peacekeeping effectiveness, and reform. Most notably, organized hypocrisy regarding the use of PMSCs is in danger of challenging the credibility of the UN as a norm entrepreneur, hinder the effectiveness of the outsourcing practices of its agencies, and delay the reform of UN peacekeeping and crisis management at large.

**Keywords:** private military and security companies; organized hypocrisy, anti-mercenary norm, United Nations, contractors

## Introduction

In an influential article published in the *European Journal of International Relations*, Michael Lipson examined the large gap between United Nations (UN) talk and action on peacekeeping, conceptualizing the UN's failure to uphold the norms it rhetorically espouses as a form of organized hypocrisy.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the concept of organized hypocrisy has been sparsely used in the study of peace and stability missions,<sup>2</sup> the World Bank,<sup>3</sup> and the European Union policies and agencies.<sup>4</sup> However, the scholarship on the privatization of security has not yet employed the concept despite its utility in capturing the tension between established norms like the mercenary taboo, institutional constraints over the deployment of troops abroad, and the need for effective peace and crisis management operations.

In this article, we introduce the concept of organized hypocrisy in the study of private security by focusing on the UN's use of services provided by private military and security companies (PMSCs). Specifically, we utilize the concept to make sense of the UN's transition from a prominent antimercenary norm entrepreneur in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to an equally prominent user of PMSCs services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since the end of the Cold War, the UN has simultaneously been expected to uphold the antimercenary norm and faced a growing inability to mobilize the manpower and expertise needed for effective crisis management. We argue that this tension has prompted a decoupling between UN talk and action regarding PMSCs. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the UN concurrently persisted in vocally

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<sup>1</sup> Lipson, 'Peacekeeping.'

<sup>2</sup> Egnell, 'The Organised Hypocrisy of International State-Building'; Hirschmann, 'Peacebuilding in UN Peacekeeping Exit Strategies: Organized Hypocrisy and Institutional Reform'; Everett, *Humanitarian Hypocrisy*.

<sup>3</sup> Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap: The World Bank and the Poverty of Reform*.

<sup>4</sup> Cusumano, 'Migrant Rescue as Organized Hypocrisy: EU Maritime Missions Offshore Libya between Humanitarianism and Border Control'; Knill, Steinebach, and Fernández-i-Marín, 'Hypocrisy as a Crisis Response? Assessing Changes in Talk, Decisions, and Actions of the European Commission in EU Environmental Policy'; Lavenex, 'Mutual Recognition and the Monopoly of Force: Limits of the Single Market Analogy.'

condemning private providers of security while progressively increasing its use of PMSCs services. In May 2011, the UN Secretary-General officially acknowledged the use of armed private security guards as a last resort for the first time, justifying contractor support as the outcome of the increasing demand for UN action in highly insecure (post)conflict areas and the continuing lack of supply of protection for UN personnel and operations by the host countries or the other UN Member States.<sup>5</sup> Shortly thereafter, the UN Department of Safety and Security published specific guidelines on the use of PMSCs services.<sup>6</sup> These acknowledgements narrowed but did not completely bridge the gap between UN talk and action on security privatization. UN agencies' dramatic increase in the resort to PMSCs services continues to stand in stark contrast with both the official UN policy, which restricts outsourcing to situations of last resort, and the discourses by the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Violating Human Rights and Impeding the Exercise of the Right of Peoples to Self-determination (from now on simply referred to as the Working Group). While begrudgingly acknowledging the difference between PMSCs and mercenaries, the Working Group has continued to portray PMSCs in a very negative light, presenting them as problematic entities frequently responsible for human rights violations and expressing several principled objections against their use. We, therefore, argue that UN decision-making, talk, and action on PMSCs have remained decoupled, displaying a considerable degree of hypocrisy.

It is important to note at this point that the UN has always stressed that it only uses defensive security services of private security companies (PSCs) and not military services of private military companies (PMCs).<sup>7</sup> While this is empirically correct in

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<sup>5</sup> UN Secretary General, 'Use of Private Security,' para. 8.

<sup>6</sup> UN Department of Safety and Security, 'Guidelines on the Use of Armed Security Services from Private Security Companies.'

<sup>7</sup> Østensen, 'UN Use of Private Military and Security Companies: Practices and Policies,' 7.

most cases where the UN directly hires security services (see below), the line between military and security services is often blurred, and the same companies contracted by the UN are also known to provide military services to other clients in the same areas of operation. Thus, in line with the current academic literature and the 2008 Montreux Document,<sup>8</sup> which summarizes the pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for states' use of private security services, in this article, we use the umbrella term private military and security companies and the corresponding abbreviation PMSCs.

By analysing the UN's transition from antimercenary norm entrepreneurship to organized hypocrisy, we provide a twofold contribution to the existing literature. First, we innovate on existing private security studies by showing the heuristic utility of organized hypocrisy in capturing the tension between the normative commitment to a state monopoly of violence and the growing material and political incentives attached to the use of PMSCs. Second, we contribute to ongoing debates on international norms change by highlighting a phenomenon that existing norm scholarship has not yet thoroughly examined: the fact that existing norms are often rhetorically adhered to, but violated in practice.

To map the mismatch between talk and action in a measurable fashion, this article combines official UN data on the use of PMSCs services and a content analysis of UN documents discussing the privatization of security and its implications. As 'a technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying characteristics of specified messages,'<sup>9</sup> content analysis provides an ideal tool for examining organizations' rhetoric and the extent to which it is decoupled from behaviour. We concentrate on examining the talk by the Working Group, the only UN

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<sup>8</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, 'The Montreux Document on Private Military and Security Companies.'

<sup>9</sup> Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 25.

body officially tasked with monitoring, regulating and sanctioning mercenaries and mercenary-related activities as well as (formally since September 2014) PMSCs. By collecting all the reports drafted by the Working Group since 2008, we built a corpus of over 418,000 words, examined through the data analysis software MAXQDA. We then both quantitatively counted the frequency in the context of keywords revealing a negative assessment of PMSCs and qualitatively assessed the content and intensity of this criticism. By examining each of these keywords within its content, we excluded from our analysis all negative references to actors other than PMSCs that are sometimes discussed by the Working Group, such as traditional mercenaries and foreign fighters. We then investigated UN action by using existing official figures on UN spending on PMSCs gathered from the Annual Statistical Reports on UN Procurement and the data provided by the UN Procurement Division. As no systematic data on UN use of PMSCs before 2008 is available, we focus our analysis on the period between 2008 and 2019.

This article is structured as follows. The next section briefly reviews the notion of organized hypocrisy, applying it to the UN system and the privatization of security services therein. Section three introduces the antimercenary norm, and the role played by the UN in its institutionalization. Section four focuses on UN action, examining the increasing use of PMSCs services in UN operations. Section five focuses on UN talk, illustrating the persistence of strong criticism against commercial providers of security through a content analysis of UN Working Group reports. Section six analyses the findings of the article, explaining the decoupling between the UN discourse on PMSCs and the organization's growing use of contractors. The concluding section fleshes out the implications of our findings and sketches some avenues for future research.

## Organized Hypocrisy

Institutionalists have long acknowledged that organizations' structures and behaviour are shaped by both material constraints and societal expectations of conformity with existing normative standards.<sup>10</sup> All organizations owe their survival to their external environment, from which they draw authority, legitimacy, and resources. As they are informed by different norms and interests, however, the demands imposed on organizations by their external constituencies are far from consistent<sup>11</sup>. All collective actors face conflicting normative logics of appropriateness and instrumental logics of consequences.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, they tend to develop separate, 'decoupled' responses to these contradictory pressures.<sup>13</sup>

As already noted by institutionalist scholarship,<sup>14</sup> organizations reflect their external environment in their internal structure. When facing contradictory external pressures, organizations are likely to decouple their internal processes. To comply with existing societal expectations, appropriate formal structures are then created within an organization. Such structures, however, are also decoupled – that is, causally disconnected – from incompatible internal activities. Accordingly, for instance, an organization could develop an affirmative action office without revising its hiring practices, or draft codes of conduct outlining their corporate social responsibility while keeping its labour and environmental standards unchanged. This tendency to decouple internal structure and processes, typical of what Brunsson calls

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<sup>10</sup> DiMaggio and Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited'; March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*; Meyer and Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations.'

<sup>11</sup> Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions, and Actions in Organizations*; Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap: The World Bank and the Poverty of Reform*.

<sup>12</sup> March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*.

<sup>13</sup> Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions, and Actions in Organizations*.

<sup>14</sup> Meyer and Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations.'

political organizations, is referred to as *the organization of hypocrisy*.<sup>15</sup> By incorporating the contradictions inherent in its member states' different normative expectations into its diverse sets of bodies and agencies, the UN system is a clear example of the organization of hypocrisy.<sup>16</sup>

Besides stovepiping their internal functioning, organizations facing contradictory demands also tend to decouple their external outputs. The global norms that political organizations are expected to uphold are often both inconsistent with one another and incompatible with existing constraints and available resources. When asked to satisfy such contradictory demands, organizations are likely to decouple talk, decisions, and action, rhetorically embracing publicly accepted norms even though these norms are inconsistent with their behaviour. Consequently, what organizations 'say' frequently diverges from what they actually 'do.' This systematic mismatch between the words and deeds of organizations is referred to as *organized hypocrisy*.<sup>17</sup> When organizations face contradictory pressures, a norm may be rhetorically reiterated precisely to compensate for the lack of consistent action, thereby addressing external demands to tackle an issue without really acting upon it.<sup>18</sup> In such cases, an inverse correlation may exist between rhetoric and action.<sup>19</sup>

As they have 'multiple masters' with different demands and expectations<sup>20</sup> and consist of large, complex bureaucracies where public relations and policy implementation are conducted by different departments and individuals, international organizations are especially prone to hypocrisy. Organized hypocrisy, however, was

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<sup>15</sup> Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions, and Actions in Organizations*.

<sup>16</sup> Lipson, 'Peacekeeping,' 12.

<sup>17</sup> Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions, and Actions in Organizations*; Brunsson, *The Consequences of Decision-Making*.

<sup>18</sup> Brunsson, *The Consequences of Decision-Making*, 116; Lipson, 'Peacekeeping.'

<sup>19</sup> Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions, and Actions in Organizations*; Lipson, 'Peacekeeping.'

<sup>20</sup> Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap: The World Bank and the Poverty of Reform*, 4–5.

introduced in the field of international relations by Stephen Krasner to examine the institution of sovereignty, often rhetorically affirmed but, in fact, systematically violated by the rulers of powerful states in the international system.<sup>21</sup> Although we resonate with Krasner in arguing that the state monopoly of violence can be considered a form of organized hypocrisy like sovereignty itself, our work draws primarily on the work of Brunsson, who focuses on hypocrisy in open-systems organizations,<sup>22</sup> and Lipson, who first applied the notion of hypocrisy to examine the gap between talk and action in UN peacekeeping.<sup>23</sup>

As noted by Lipson, the UN's legitimacy rests upon its ability to exemplify and uphold widely held international norms. Such norms, however, are often inconsistent with one another. For instance, upholding a responsibility to protect through crisis management operations is hardly compatible with the non-interference in states' domestic affairs that underlies the principle of sovereignty. Moreover, normative imperatives like preventing genocide clash with both institutional and material constraints, such as the frequent deadlocks within the UN Security Council and member states' unwillingness to provide the resources required to conduct effective peacekeeping operations. Hypocrisy especially pervades both the discourses surrounding the reform of the UN<sup>24</sup> and the behaviour of UN peacekeeping forces when developing exit strategies,<sup>25</sup> as well as national peacekeeping units conducting civilian protection<sup>26</sup> and state-building operations.<sup>27</sup>

Since Lipson's article, ensuing IR scholarship has made scant reference to the

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<sup>21</sup> Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*.

<sup>22</sup> Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions, and Actions in Organizations*; Brunsson, *The Consequences of Decision-Making*.

<sup>23</sup> Lipson, 'Peacekeeping.'

<sup>24</sup> Lipson.

<sup>25</sup> Hirschmann, 'Peacebuilding in UN Peacekeeping Exit Strategies: Organized Hypocrisy and Institutional Reform.'

<sup>26</sup> Everett, *Humanitarian Hypocrisy*.

<sup>27</sup> Egnell, 'The Organised Hypocrisy of International State-Building.'

notion of organized hypocrisy and primarily employed the concept to examine other international organizations, such as the World Bank,<sup>28</sup> and different agencies within the European Union.<sup>29</sup> In the remaining sections of this article, we refocus the concept of organized hypocrisy on the UN to shed light on an unexplored phenomenon: the persisting gap between talk and action regarding PMSCs. Private military and security contractors continue to be seen as a last resort by UN official policy and flagged as intrinsically problematic actors by the Working Group, but are increasingly relied on by all parts the UN system, including its humanitarian, political and peacekeeping missions.

### **The Anti-Mercenary Norm and the Role of the United Nations in Its Institutionalization**

The post-Cold War proliferation of PMSCs has raised numerous questions about the scope and relevance of the international norm against mercenaries, whose origins can be traced as far back as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Sarah Percy, who first conceptualized the prohibition to use mercenaries as an international norm in a book-length analysis, contended that there is ‘a clear thread of continuity between the pre-nineteenth century variants of the antimercenary norm and those of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries’ when it comes to its two key aspects: 1) the belief that mercenaries are negative actors because they do not fight for a proper cause, and as a result undermine the group which hires them, and; 2) the belief that mercenaries are uncontrolled, and as a result undermine the role of the state as the primary holder of

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<sup>28</sup> Weaver, *Hypocrisy Trap: The World Bank and the Poverty of Reform*.

<sup>29</sup> Cusumano, ‘Migrant Rescue as Organized Hypocrisy: EU Maritime Missions Offshore Libya between Humanitarianism and Border Control’; Knill, Steinebach, and Fernández-i-Marín, ‘Hypocrisy as a Crisis Response? Assessing Changes in Talk, Decisions, and Actions of the European Commission in EU Environmental Policy’; Lavenex, ‘Mutual Recognition and the Monopoly of Force: Limits of the Single Market Analogy.’

the monopoly of the use of force.<sup>30</sup> According to Percy, 21<sup>st</sup> century PMSCs, therefore, should not be considered mercenaries because they share a commitment to a greater cause when they fight for the goals of their home state, contract ‘primarily’ or ‘exclusively’ with their home state, or work only on projects approved by their home state, either formally (as in the US) or informally (as in the UK).<sup>31</sup> As such,, neither the presence of a sizeable PMSCs industry nor the fact that powerful states are keen to use its services, ‘poses a major challenge to the continued influence of the norm against mercenary use.’ As Percy acknowledges, however, PMSCs ‘do not entirely avoid the antimercenary norm,’ which still shapes both the opportunities available to PMSCs and the ways states and other actors use them.<sup>32</sup>

Although there are several alternative accounts of the history,<sup>33</sup> evolution,<sup>34</sup> scope,<sup>35</sup> and strength<sup>36</sup> of the antimercenary norm, follow-up scholarship has forcefully emphasized that if Percy’s definition of mercenaries ‘is taken for granted, PMSCs come under the regulatory scope of the norm,’ because they too are motivated by profit, thereby lacking an appropriate cause for engaging in hostility, and are insufficiently controlled and regulated by states.<sup>37</sup> As we show in this article, these two key normative claims can also be detected in the majority of the reports by the

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<sup>30</sup> Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations*, 218–19.

<sup>31</sup> Percy, 235.

<sup>32</sup> Percy, 232; Percy, ‘The Unimplemented Norm,’ 80.

<sup>33</sup> Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe*.

<sup>34</sup> Fitzsimmons, ‘A Rational-Constructivist Explanation for the Evolution and Decline of the Norm against Mercenarism’; Krahnmann, ‘The United States, PMSCs and the State Monopoly on Violence’; Panke and Petersohn, ‘Why International Norms Disappear Sometimes’; Panke and Petersohn, ‘Norm Challenges and Norm Death.’

<sup>35</sup> Petersohn, ‘Reframing the Anti-Mercenary Norm: Private Military and Security Companies and Mercenarism.’

<sup>36</sup> Brewis and Godfrey, ‘“Never Call Me a Mercenary”: Identity Work, Stigma Management and the Private Security Contractor’; Bures and Meyer, ‘The Anti-Mercenary Norm and United Nations’ Use of Private Military and Security Companies’; Casiraghi, ‘Weak, Politicized, Absent: The Anti-Mercenary Norm in Italy and the United Kingdom, 1805–2017’; Liu and Kinsey, ‘Challenging the Strength of the Antimercenary Norm’; White, ‘Mercenarism, Norms and Market Exchange: Reassembling the Private Military Labour Market.’

<sup>37</sup> Petersohn, ‘Reframing the Anti-Mercenary Norm: Private Military and Security Companies and Mercenarism,’ 480–81.

UN Working Group, which are deeply permeated by a ‘lingering sense that private force is morally problematic.’<sup>38</sup> Most notably, they frequently stress that the profit-driven nature of PMSCs is fundamentally incompatible with peace, security, as well as social justice, and that their activities lack transparency and accountability.

Working Group reports also resonate with studies claiming that several norms actually matter when it comes to the use of private force and the persistence of the normative opprobrium may be due to their inter-linkage. According to Krahmann, for example, ‘the differentiation between mercenaries who fight in ‘combat’ and PMSCs who engage in “defensive operations”,’ along with the ‘discursive reinterpretation of the core functions of the state and the military’ linked to the proliferation of PMSCs in the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan in the mid-2000s, actually explains a transformation in the norm prescribing a state monopoly on violence, ‘while at the same time the norm against mercenarism has remained strong.’<sup>39</sup> Alternatively, Liu and Kinsey suggested that ‘the antimercenary norm grounded in moral objections is not as strong as its supporters suggest’, and maintained that the ‘international restrictions placed upon mercenaries are the tangential expressions of more basic and pervasive international norms, namely those of state neutrality, the right of peoples to self-determination, and freedom of movement.’<sup>40</sup> In contrast, Percy argued that the antimercenary norm had a ‘puritanical’ impact in the 1990s and early 2000s and contended that this was not only a consequence of its long history and early institutionalization, but also of its linkage to other powerful norms, including the norm that citizens owe a military duty to the state, the norms associated with the institution of war, and the norms of national self-determination and decolonization.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Percy, ‘The Unimplemented Norm,’ 240.

<sup>39</sup> Krahmann, “The United States, PMSCs and the State Monopoly on Violence,” 65.

<sup>40</sup> Liu and Kinsey, ‘Challenging the Strength of the Antimercenary Norm,’ 93.

<sup>41</sup> Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations*, 35.

Although it remains an open question how salient any of the aforementioned norms will be in the future, they would all have to erode significantly for the antimercenary norm itself to lose all its strength. To a large extent, this is a consequence of the crucial role played by the UN in the diffusion, institutionalization, and interlinking of many of these norms. In particular, the promotion of the norms of national self-determination and decolonization was a key part of the agenda of the UN during the Cold War. In the early 1990s, they also offered a new direction from which to attack PMSCs – ‘that mercenaries in any form challenged national self-determination ... even though there was little empirical evidence that self-determination was undermined by the 1990s variant of private force.’<sup>42</sup>

Specifically, since the 1960s, the UN General Assembly has passed more than 100 resolutions criticizing mercenaries. For example, in 1968, Resolution 2465 explicitly referred to mercenaries as ‘outlaws,’ and called for all states ‘to enact legislation declaring the recruitment, financing, and training of mercenaries in their territory to be a punishable offence and prohibiting their nationals from serving as mercenaries.’<sup>43</sup> Mercenaries were also explicitly referred to in the 1974 UN General Assembly’s Definition of Aggression<sup>44</sup> and in the 1979 resolution on the ‘importance of the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination,’ which has been reaffirmed annually until 2005 and according to which the use of ‘mercenaries against national liberation movements and sovereign States constitutes a criminal act and ... mercenaries themselves are criminals.’<sup>45</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, the UN Security Council also adopted several resolutions condemning states which persisted

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<sup>42</sup> Percy, 29.

<sup>43</sup> UN General Assembly, Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

<sup>44</sup> UN General Assembly, Definition of Aggression.

<sup>45</sup> UN General Assembly, Importance of the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination and of the speedy granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights.

in permitting or tolerating the recruitment of mercenaries.<sup>46</sup> Similar statements can be found in numerous reports of the former UN Special Rapporteur on use of mercenaries as a means of impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, who considered PMSCs a ‘new operational model of mercenarism’ that threatened the civilian populations, peace and state’s sovereignty.<sup>47</sup> From 1987 until 2005, when the post was replaced with the UN Working Group on Mercenaries, the Rapporteur’s reports reflected the moral disapproval of both mercenaries and PMSCs by the UN High Commission for Human Rights (since 2006 the Human Rights Council), the inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe.

Jointly, these numerous UN resolutions and reports set the stage for further legal institutionalization of the antimercenary norm, as manifested in the 1989 UN *International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries*. Moreover, as we demonstrate empirically in the following section, these documents also influenced the thinking of senior UN officials in the Secretariat and key UN agencies, which did not seriously consider the use of PMSCs services in the 1990s and early 2000s, albeit the possibility of using private force have been mooted on several occasions within the UN system.<sup>48</sup> Overall, one can therefore concur with Percy that since the 1960s, ‘the UN has acted as a sort of world-class publicist in reverse for mercenaries.’<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> UN Security Council, UN Security Council Resolution 241 (1967); UN Security Council, UN Security Council Resolution 405 (1977).

<sup>47</sup> Ballesteros, ‘Report on the Question of the Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Violating Human Rights and Impeding the Exercise of the Rights of Peoples to Self-Determination,’ para. 68.

<sup>48</sup> Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations*, 222; Bures, ‘Private Military Companies: A Second-Best Peacekeeping Option?’

<sup>49</sup> Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations*, 239.

### **Action: UN Use of Private Military and Security Companies**

As discussed in the previous section, during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the UN promoted an orthodox version of the antimercenary norm, which prohibited the use of any form of private force. Correspondingly, the UN could not even seriously contemplate the use of either mercenary or PMSCs services. Thus, although the UN used some specialized transportation and logistical services already in the 1990s,<sup>50</sup> widespread security outsourcing of security and support tasks within the UN system only started in the early-2000s. Ever since, however, contracting the services of PMSCs has become a common and systematic practice in most, if not all, UN agencies, funds, programmes, departments, country teams, and local duty stations. UN agencies have used PMSCs for a wide range of activities, including both armed and unarmed security, risk assessment, security training and management, logistical support, base construction, transportation, convoy protection, consultancy, and other specialised services such as demining, election support, strategic information gathering, and security sector reform. The use of PMSCs services has also been documented in all types of UN field missions, including humanitarian, political, as well as peacekeeping missions.<sup>51</sup>

When it comes to UN reports, however, specific data on the use of PMSCs services has been published only twice thus far. In December 2012, the annexes of a report by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions offered for the first-time concrete information regarding the numbers of armed

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<sup>50</sup> Bures, 'Private Military Companies: A Second-Best Peacekeeping Option?'; Østensen, 'UN Use of Private Military and Security Companies: Practices and Policies.'

<sup>51</sup> Bures and Meyer, 'The Anti-Mercenary Norm and United Nations' Use of Private Military and Security Companies'; Østensen, 'UN Use of Private Military and Security Companies: Practices and Policies'; Østensen, 'In the Business of Peace: The Political Influence of Private Military and Security Companies on UN Peacekeeping'; Patterson, 'A Corporate Alternative to United Nations Ad Hoc Military Deployments'; Pingeot, 'Dangerous Partnership - Private Military & Security Companies and the UN'; Pingeot, 'Contracting Insecurity - Private Military and Security Companies and the Future of the United Nations'; Tkach and Phillips, 'UN Organizational and Financial Incentives to Employ Private Military and Security Companies in Peacekeeping Operations.'

PMSCs personnel used in UN political missions and peacekeeping operations in the 2012-2013 period, including company names and UN General Assembly approved budgets. Specifically, the report indicated that 42 PMSCs were under contract with UN missions and operations as of October 2012, employing over 5,000 armed private guards, with a total budget of \$30,931,122.<sup>52</sup> The second UN report with specific data on UN's PMSCs contracting is the August 2014 report of the UN Working Group. While not providing lists of PMSCs contracts in different UN missions, the report stated that as of May 2014, 30 unarmed and armed companies had been used in peacekeeping missions and political missions. The report specifically listed only 12 peacekeeping missions and one facility of the Department of Field support, claiming that of the total of 4,412 security guards contracted by these 13 entities, only 574 were armed.<sup>53</sup>

As pointed out by Bures and Meyer, the data presented in these UN reports is of questionably quality due to discrepancies within the reported figures and the apparent lack of understanding of the complex global nature of the PMSCs business by their authors ('representatives of the Secretary-General').<sup>54</sup> We therefore also searched the Annual Statistical Reports on UN Procurement and the statistics provided by the UN Procurement Division. Since 2009, the Annual Statistical Reports include data for two further unspecified categories of 'Security Services' and 'Security and Safety Equipment,' which offer insights into all security outsourcing by the entire UN system. Importantly, this includes data for most of the key UN funds, programmes, and agencies, which tend to procure their own contracts with PMSCs. In

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<sup>52</sup> Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, 'Reports on the Department of Safety and Security and on the Use of Private Security.'

<sup>53</sup> UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries, 'Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Violating Human Rights and Impeding the Exercise of the Right of Peoples to Self-Determination,' para. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Bures and Meyer, 'The Anti-Mercenary Norm and United Nations' Use of Private Military and Security Companies.'

contrast, the statistics provided since 2007 by the UN Procurement Division include data for security procurement of UN Headquarters and local UN missions only. Albeit the data in the annual UN Statistical Reports and the UN Procurement Division databases may be incomplete and the specific figures that they provide often differ,<sup>55</sup> it does allow for tracking the overall trends of UN expenditures on security procurement over the last decade. As indicated in figure 1, there has been an overall 486% increase in the UN's total expenditures on security services and security equipment contracting between 2009 and 2018. Equally remarkable is the 455% increase in UN's total expenditures on security procurement by UN Headquarters and local missions between 2007 and 2019 captured in figure 2.

**[Figures 1 and 2 somewhere here]**

### **Talk: Working Group Discourse Regarding the Use of Private Military and Security Companies**

As demonstrated in the previous section, it would be difficult to find a part of the UN system that has not used the services of PMSCs in the last decade. In particular, peacekeeping operations have witnessed an especially pervasive use of contractor for the provision of security and logistical support. In contrast, only two bodies established by the UN Commission on Human Rights (since 2006 replaced by Human Rights Council) have been specifically mandated to discuss, and in practice also consistently covered, security outsourcing: the UN Special Rapporteur on use of mercenaries, appointed in 1987, and the UN Working Group on use of mercenaries, which replaced the Rapporteur in 2005. Only few other parts of the UN system have officially stated their opinions regarding the UN's use of PMSCs. Two notable

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<sup>55</sup> Pingeot, 'Dangerous Partnership - Private Military & Security Companies and the UN,' 47.

exceptions include the 2002 report of the Secretary General on UN outsourcing practices, which stated that contracting out security services ‘may compromise the safety and security of delegations staff and visitors’ and noted that PMSCs services ‘will be phased out in due course’ and replaced with UN staff members.<sup>56</sup> For its part, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs raised its concerns about PMSCs role in war-torn areas in its 2004 guidelines on humanitarian-military interaction in Iraq, noting that they were ‘increasingly becoming a target’ and raised ‘problems of operational control, accountability and liability.’<sup>57</sup>

Beyond the May 2011 explicit justification of UN use of PMSCs by the Secretary General and the subsequent publication of the first official UN policy<sup>58</sup> and specific guidelines on the use of PMSCs services,<sup>59</sup> there is also only a remarkably small number of ad hoc statements of top UN officials on this topic. Notably, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan argued in 1998 that ‘the world may not be ready to privatize peace.’<sup>60</sup> Jean-Marie Guéhenno, a former Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, was ‘also opposed to expansive new security privatization.’<sup>61</sup> In her 2007 book, Percy cited only three interviews with UN officials to support her claim that ‘the depth of international dislike for mercenaries would prevent the UN from ever using private force in a peacekeeping capacity, no matter how useful they might be.’<sup>62</sup> Moreover, as discussed above, despite repeated requests

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<sup>56</sup> UN General Assembly, ‘Outsourcing Practices - Report of the Secretary-General,’ para. 4.

<sup>57</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ‘Guidelines for Humanitarian Organisations on Interacting With Military and Other Security Actors in Iraq,’ 5.

<sup>58</sup> UN Department of Safety and Security, ‘United Nations Security Policy Manual, Chapter IV,’ para. 3.

<sup>59</sup> UN Department of Safety and Security, ‘Guidelines on the Use of Armed Security Services from Private Security Companies.’

<sup>60</sup> United Nations, ‘Secretary-General Reflects on ‘intervention’ in Thirty-Fifth Annual Ditchley Foundation Lecture.’

<sup>61</sup> Cited in Pingeot, ‘Dangerous Partnership - Private Military & Security Companies and the UN,’ 23.

<sup>62</sup> Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations*, 224.

for greater transparency both from within the UN system and from external experts,<sup>63</sup> only two UN reports have thus provided specific data regarding the UN's use of PMSCs and the accuracy of some of this data is open to debate.

For our analysis, however, the UN silence vis-à-vis its own use of PMSCs services has one important advantage, allowing us to focus our content analysis on the reports of the UN Working Group, the only UN body specifically tasked with covering the activities both traditional mercenaries and PMSCs.<sup>64</sup> This analysis reveals that while its initial reports (published from 2005-2008) largely echoed the self-determination, national-sovereignty and human-rights violations critiques from the annual reports published by the Working Group's predecessor (the Special Rapporteur), from 2008 onwards the focus has gradually shifted to the regulation of PMSCs activities, but remained deeply critical.<sup>65</sup> In order to more tightly regulate the activities of PMSCs, the Working Group repeatedly pointed out the need for a new international legally binding regulatory instrument that would replace the mostly ineffective 1989 UN International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. In 2009, pending a request by the Human Rights Council, the Working Group presented such an instrument – the UN Draft International Convention on the Regulation, Oversight, and Monitoring of Private Military and Security Companies which emphasises state responsibility to regulate and monitor, rather than ban and criminalize, PMSCs activities.<sup>66</sup> Albeit this Draft Convention has had few practical or political implications thus far, the recent UN

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<sup>63</sup> Østensen, 'UN Use of Private Military and Security Companies: Practices and Policies'; Pingeot, 'Contracting Insecurity - Private Military and Security Companies and the Future of the United Nations.'

<sup>64</sup> UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries.'

<sup>65</sup> The Working Group reports are available at [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?m=152](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=152). The Special Rapporteur reports are available at [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?m=105](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=105)

<sup>66</sup> For an analysis of the Draft Conventions provisions, as well as their shortcomings, see Østensen, 'UN Use of Private Military and Security Companies: Practices and Policies.'

emphasis on regulation and control of PMSCs activities is both clear and unprecedented in UN history.

In addition, our software analysis of all UN Working Group reports suggests the following vis-à-vis UN talk about the use of PMSCs services. Even if the Working Group concedes that ‘PMSCs are not mercenaries’ (A/HRC/15/25/2010, Add.6) and acknowledges that, according to most of the experts they consulted, ‘the existence of a State monopoly on the use of force does not preclude States from delegating certain functions involving the use of force to private actors’ (A/66/317/2011), the portrayal of PMSCs and security privatization remains overwhelmingly negative. Up until its latest reports, the Working Group frames PMSCs as problematic actors by, focusing on human rights violations by armed guards securing extractive industry facilities, the use of child soldiers by PMSCs, and the abuses arising from the privatization of prisons and migrant detention centres.

The wording used to describe PMSCS’ activities and their implications is fraught with derogatory terms. For example, a 2017 Working Group report still stresses that ‘[t]he ever-increasing privatization of security and military functions and the general growth of the private military and security industry across international boundaries raise serious questions about the legitimacy of the private use of force’ and poses ‘great risks for the violation of human rights’ (A/HRC/36/47/2017). This mindset is epitomized by the frequency of negative associations between PMSCs and unlawful behaviour. PMSCs and their employees are consistently flagged as potentially responsible for ‘violations’ of human rights, international humanitarian law, and domestic law (22 iterations), ‘abuses’ (38 iterations), as well as criminal behaviour and wrongdoings (14 iterations). Specifically, the Working Group repeatedly holds PMSCs responsible for instances of excessive or arbitrary use of

force (5 iterations), which, in turn, has caused killings, casualties, and great injury (6 iterations), as well as ‘physical violence, acts of threats and intimidation.’ Private guards operating in detention facilities or in armed security roles are held responsible for a wide range of crimes, including ‘sex trafficking’ and ‘inappropriate sexual behaviour,’ ‘repression of social protests,’ as well as ‘abuse’ and ‘neglect of prisoners.’ These wrongdoings are exacerbated by the persistence of a climate of ‘impunity,’ a term iterated very frequently (29 times) with reference to private security contractors’ behaviour. Companies at large are criticized for the illegal acquisition of weapons, poor vetting of employees, including the use of former child soldiers (an argument iterated 5 times), effectively lobbying on governments to obtain contracts and amenable legislation (8 times), or even engaging in ‘corruption’ (10 iterations) and ‘bribery’ (7 iterations), and in one occasion even stigmatized for ‘the promotion of social and political instability’ (A/HRC/42/36/ 2019). Although the Working Group forcefully stresses the need for national and international regulation to mitigate the risks posed by PMSCs, several reports acknowledge that said the risks cannot be entirely eliminated, because they are tied to the ‘very nature of the private sector.’ (A/ 72/150 2017). The fact that PMSCs have ‘profit as their main objective’ causes ‘perverse incentives’ which ‘undoubtedly risk economies being achieved through reductions in service.’ These externalities are exacerbated by the fact that companies are solely ‘responsible to their shareholders, not to the public,’ and ‘private security guards do not defend common interests and the common good, but rather the private interests of those who hire and pay them’ (A/HRC/7/7/ 2008).

The combination of ‘profit motive, efficiency concerns and a lack of accountability’ are ‘problematic realities... that contribute to an increased risk of human rights violations and abuses.’ (A /72/28 2017) According to the Working

Group, the trend towards a commodification of security is therefore inherently undesirable. When privatized, security ‘becomes a commodity that only the rich would be able to afford’ (A/65/325/2010) and ‘will no longer be available as a public service to those who cannot afford to pay for it, thereby violating the right to equity’ (A/HRC/7/7/ 2008). Furthermore, the privatization of security poses challenges to the stability of the state system. The use of PMSCs services undermines the state monopoly of violence as well as states’ sovereignty (4 iterations) and does not only raise serious questions about ‘the capacity of States to control their territory effectively’ (A/HRC/36/47/2017) but also allows them ‘to dilute the responsibility of public authorities’ (A/72/286/2017).

In summary, even if the Working Group departed from the sweeping statements of the UN Rapporteur on Mercenaries it replaced, its discourses remain replete with a deep distrust towards PMSCs and a strong normative preference towards the state monopoly of violence. This wariness is apparent in the frequency of associations between security privatization and adverse outcomes. Syntagmas referring to PMSCs and employees often contain adjectives like ‘negative’ (20 iterations) and nouns like ‘harm’ (19 iterations), ‘impunity’ (29 iterations), and most notably ‘risk’ (49 in-context iterations). The frequency of these negative references varies depending on the specific subjects and areas covered by each Working Group report, but it does not appear to have consistently decreased over time. Even if the Working Group generally refrained from labelling them as mercenaries, its portrayal of PMSCs continues to tap into the two principal arguments underlying the antimercenary norm: their profit-oriented nature, which does not amount to a proper cause for engaging in the provision of coercion, and their unaccountable, unregulated nature, which undermines states’ control over the use of force.

The findings of the content analysis are illustrated in figure 3 below. As shown by the word cloud, the focus of the Working Group activities is mainly geared towards regulation, as epitomized by the frequency of words like ‘resolution,’ ‘order,’ ‘act,’ ‘decree,’ ‘accountability,’ ‘code,’ ‘legislation,’ ‘standards,’ and ‘framework.’ The iterations of words like ‘violations,’ ‘violence,’ ‘criminal,’ ‘abuses’ and ‘victims,’ however, reveals that the Working Group’s discourse on PMSCs remained overwhelmingly negative. This point is further illustrated by the frequent iterations of the word ‘lack,’ often declined as ‘lack of accountability’ (29 iterations), ‘lack of transparency’ (27 iterations), ‘lack of regulation’ (8 iterations), ‘lack of information’ (5 iterations), and ‘lack of training (3 iterations). The same concepts are often expressed through similar nouns, like ‘absence,’ or adjectives like ‘insufficient,’ usually paired with terms like ‘regulation,’ ‘accountability,’ ‘training,’ and ‘performance.’

**[Figure 3 somewhere here]**

This talk is clearly at odds with the increasing use of PMSCs within the UN system. This tension is explicitly discussed in the 2014 report of the Working Group (A/69/338), which therefore warrants further examination. The report acknowledges the extensive use of PMSCs by the UN and the fact that this practice is deemed necessary to fill manpower gaps and mitigate the high risks faced by its personnel. However, the Working Group repeatedly stresses that the outsourcing of security and support in crisis management missions poses ‘vast and complex challenges’ to the United Nations, and may be both ‘detrimental to the human rights of local populations and harmful to the credibility of the Organization.’ While the document states that ‘the existing United Nations Guidelines on the Use of Armed Security Services from Private Security Companies can be improved’ and provides several recommendations on how to do so, the Working Group reiterates its principled objections against

PMSCs, arguing that regulation ‘cannot address all the challenges which outsourcing security to private contractors poses.’ Consequently, the Working Group recommends that ‘the provision of security functions should remain the primary responsibility of Member States, including in providing security to the United Nations and its staff members.’ To that end, the Working Group forcefully criticizes the vagueness and ambiguity of the ‘last resort’ criterion identified by the UN Guidelines, which has frequently been stretched to cover situations where PMSCS are not necessarily the only solution available, but merely ‘the most politically expedient option’ (A/69/150/2014). As of 2020, these recommendations – as well as the broader, principled hostility to security privatization displayed by the Working Group – continue to stand in stark contrast with the practice prevalent in all other parts of the UN system.

## **Findings**

As amply documented in the existing literature, any organization with multiple principals and conflicting objectives is inevitably set to engage in organized hypocrisy. In the case of the UN, as noted by Lipson, contracting out field operations to regional organizations like NATO or ECOWAS is a way of ‘managing the pressure of inconsistent logics of consequences and appropriateness.’<sup>67</sup> The existing literature, however, has not explicitly investigated the mismatch between UN contracting to PMSCs and its continuing rhetorical commitment to the antimercenary norm.

In order to fill this gap, we have made two interrelated claims. First, the creation of a Rapporteur (then transformed in the Working Group) on the use of mercenaries is a textbook example of the organization of hypocrisy. The Rapporteur

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<sup>67</sup> Lipson, ‘Peacekeeping,’ 22.

was created in 1987 by the UN Commission on Human Rights to uphold the state monopoly of violence and voice the concern of former colonies that had suffered from the activities of mercenaries in their territory. By then, however, the most powerful states in the international system had already shown minimal appetite for banning private providers of violence – as demonstrated by the refusal of all the UN Security Council permanent members to ratify the 1989 UN International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. Even if all attempts to ban mercenaries had stalled and the private provision of security and military support had by then become mainstream, in 2005 the position of the Rapporteur was replaced by the Working Group, also tasked with covering the activities of PMSCs since 2014. Arguably, the very existence and mandate of the Working Group – whose reports and recommendations had little to no influence on the operational practices of the other parts of the UN system – clearly illustrate Brunsson’s notion of organization of hypocrisy. As the Working Group was *de facto* disconnected from the internal working of the UN, its establishment and endurance seem to reflect an attempt to show compliance with the normative expectations of some member states more than a genuine willingness to uphold a state monopoly of violence within the organization.

Second, we have argued that the gap between the UN’s talk and action on PMSCS can be fruitfully conceptualized as a form of organized hypocrisy. Consistent with the concerns of former colonies in the Global South, the Rapporteur and Working Group have forcefully warned about the consequences of security privatization and expressed a deep-seated wariness towards PMSCs. UN agencies and missions tasked with acting upon crises worldwide, however, have been plagued by a chronic shortage of manpower and support capabilities. The simultaneous expectation that the UN should both uphold a state monopoly of violence and operate in

increasingly dangerous environments inevitably clashed with member states' unwillingness to endow the organization with sufficient resources. All parts of the UN system were, therefore, inevitably prompted to turn to the private sector, using the same PMSCs vocally stigmatized first by the Rapporteur and then by the Working Group. While the use of various PMSCs services by different parts of the UN system increased steadily, their strong rhetorical condemnation of private providers of security only became slightly more nuanced, but it did not change significantly. The Rapporteur initially lumped mercenaries and PMSCs as two sides of the same coin, referring to PMSCs as 'the new operational model of mercenarism' that threatened the civilian populations, peace, and states' sovereignty.<sup>68</sup> Even if it eventually distinguished between the two and toned down some of the Rapporteur's harshest critiques, the Working Group has continued to refer to PMSCs as problematic actors that are detrimental to self-determination and sovereign equality, consistently expressing principled objections to their use.

For at least two decades, the UN approach to the privatization of security has been characterized by a persisting gap between rhetoric and behaviour concerning private providers of security and, therefore, by organized hypocrisy. The principled hostility to security privatization displayed by the Rapporteur and the Working Group has clearly been out of sync with the actual practice prevalent in all other parts of the UN system. Moreover, as demonstrated by Tkach and Phillips<sup>69</sup> and denounced by the Working Group itself, the outsourcing practices of various UN agencies depart from the UN's own guidelines formulated in 2012 by the UN Department of Safety and Security, which flag the use of PMSCs as an option of last resort. UN bureaucratic

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<sup>68</sup> Ballesteros, 'Report on the Question of the Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Violating Human Rights and Impeding the Exercise of the Rights of Peoples to Self-Determination,' para. 68.

<sup>69</sup> Tkach and Phillips, 'UN Organizational and Financial Incentives to Employ Private Military and Security Companies in Peacekeeping Operations.'

inertia created a ‘default PMSC option,’ leading many UN agencies to make an ‘unnecessary choice despite legitimacy costs inherent in the limited command and control over PMSCs.’<sup>70</sup> UN talk, decision, and actions on private security are therefore clearly decoupled.

By claiming that the UN approach to the privatization of security is fraught with hypocrisy, we do not intend to make a derogatory normative assessment against the policies formulated by the UN or the organization at large. A degree of hypocrisy is inevitable for complex, political organizations with multiple masters. In such organizations where those who talk, those who decide, and those who act are different actors, attaching moral connotations to organized hypocrisy makes no more sense than blaming as hypocritical someone ‘afflicted with multiple personalities disorder.’<sup>71</sup> This caveat is especially applicable to our analysis, which focuses on the discourses and policies formulated by different bodies of an international organization gathering representatives from 193 different states with different interests and ideologies.

## **Conclusions**

While organized hypocrisy deserves no moral condemnation and is often an inevitable response for organizations struggling to simultaneously pursue contradictory objectives, our findings do nevertheless have important implications for the debates on UN norm entrepreneurship, peacekeeping effectiveness, and reform.

First, the persisting mismatch between UN talk and action regarding PMSCs is in danger of challenging the credibility of the UN as a norm entrepreneur. The failure of the organization to abide by the prohibition to use mercenaries may cast doubts

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<sup>70</sup> Tkach and Phillips, 115.

<sup>71</sup> Lipson and Weaver, ‘Varieties of Organized Hypocrisy,’ 16.

over its commitment to a variety of other norms, thereby hindering its ability to serve as a vehicle for norm socialization and diffusion. As noted by Bures and Meyer, the UN's extensive resort to PMSCs may be seen as at odds with the UN's commitments to the core norms that underlie the very existence of the organization, like self-determination, anti-colonialism, and state sovereignty, thus threatening the UN's ontological security.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, as noted in prior research, organized hypocrisy – once unveiled – can severely tarnish the reputation of an organization.<sup>73</sup> Should any significant scandals bring the use of PMSCs to the spotlight and raise media attention, the reputational damage attached to the UN failure to abide by the very norms it preaches may, therefore, fundamentally threaten the authority and prestige of the organizations.

Second, the many contradictions and ambiguities surrounding the use of PMSCs services by the UN hinder the effectiveness of the outsourcing practices of its agencies. Vague, ill-identified criteria like the 'last resort' condition –formulated to pay lip service to the antimercenary norm but often disregarded in practice – only add complexity, confusion, and incoherence to the outsourcing process. Relatedly, the tension between the use of PMSCs in UN operations and the criticism of private security actors voiced by the Working Group have contributed to making most UN agencies to be 'remarkably shy' on their use of PMSCs services.<sup>74</sup> As agreed on by all scholars who examined the UN's use of PMSCs, this lack of transparency is set to hinder any objective assessment of contractor support to UN missions, preventing the

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<sup>72</sup> Bures and Meyer, 'The Anti-Mercenary Norm and United Nations' Use of Private Military and Security Companies.'

<sup>73</sup> Cusumano, 'Migrant Rescue as Organized Hypocrisy: EU Maritime Missions Offshore Libya between Humanitarianism and Border Control'; Lipson and Weaver, 'Varieties of Organized Hypocrisy.'

<sup>74</sup> Bures and Meyer, 'The Anti-Mercenary Norm and United Nations' Use of Private Military and Security Companies,' 91.

development of more coherent and effective contractor support policies.<sup>75</sup> This lack of transparency is likely to reduce the oversight of PMSCs supporting UN operations, thereby exacerbating the very accountability gap identified by the Working Group as one of the fundamental problems associated with outsourcing security. Incoherent and insufficiently transparent outsourcing policies are especially detrimental to peacekeeping missions, exacerbating lack of communication, command and control between blue helmets from different nationalities and the private contractors supporting them.

Third, the overlap between a discourse that continues to stigmatize the use of PMSCs and the extensive use of such actors may further delay the reform of UN peacekeeping and crisis management at large. As already noted by Lipson, organized hypocrisy has been detrimental to the efforts of reforming UN peacekeeping, hindering the perception that reforms are actually needed in the first place.<sup>76</sup> The gap between talk and action on PMSCs is especially likely to delay, and ultimately inhibit, reform. By acting as a surrogate for the manpower that member states are either unwilling or unable to provide, an opaque resort to PMSCs delays a serious discussion on how to endow the UN with the resources needed to conduct peacekeeping and crisis management tasks in increasingly volatile environments.

Given the implications of the gap between talk and action documented in this article, future research should continue to investigate the organized hypocrisy of the UN resort to PMSCs. Specifically, in parallel with examining the talk of different actors within the UN system, future scholarship should also conduct a more in-depth

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<sup>75</sup> Bures and Meyer, 'The Anti-Mercenary Norm and United Nations' Use of Private Military and Security Companies'; Østensen, 'UN Use of Private Military and Security Companies: Practices and Policies'; Østensen, 'In the Business of Peace: The Political Influence of Private Military and Security Companies on UN Peacekeeping'; Tkach and Phillips, 'UN Organizational and Financial Incentives to Employ Private Military and Security Companies in Peacekeeping Operations.'

<sup>76</sup> Lipson, "Peacekeeping."

examination of the use of PMSCs services in UN field operations, combining both quantitative overviews of total financial expenditures, number of contracts, and contracted personnel employed, as well as qualitative studies of the scope, drivers and implications of the use of contractor support to specific missions.

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