



Universitas Katolik Parahyangan
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Program Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional

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SK BAN-PT NO: 2579/SK/BAN-PT/AK-ISK/S/IV/2022

**The Threat of Private Military Company Proliferation
towards American Hegemony in Iraq (2003-2009)**

Skripsi

Diajukan untuk Ujian Sidang Jenjang Sarjana

Program Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional

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Bandung

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Abstrak

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Pada 16 September 2007, kontraktor keamanan sipil yang bekerja untuk Blackwater menembak dan membunuh 17 warga sipil Irak tanpa alasan. Untuk sebagian besar dunia, hal ini mengungkap proliferasi Perusahaan Militer Swasta oleh Pemerintah Amerika Serikat, terutama di Irak. Pada saat yang sama, kegagalan Amerika dalam mempertahankan hegemoninya di Iraq, yang telah diinvasi dan didudukinya pada tahun 2003, adalah kepercayaan umum. Studi ini menyelidiki hubungan antara proliferasi Perusahaan Militer Swasta seperti Blackwater dan hegemoni Amerika di Irak. Penelitian dilakukan melalui analisis dokumen yang tersedia untuk umum mengenai rencana dan program Amerika di Irak pascaperang, serta dokumen yang menyelidiki keterlibatan dan perilaku Blackwater dalam tatanan keamanan Amerika di Irak. Analisis menemukan bahwa perilaku Blackwater di Irak telah mengakibatkan penurunan *hard power* dan *soft power* untuk pendudukan Amerika; dimana keduanya adalah pilar hegemoni. Perilaku Blackwater adalah hasil dari kurangnya transparansi, kontrol pemerintah, dan efisiensi dari perusahaan tersebut. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Blackwater berkontribusi pada penurunan hegemoni Amerika di Irak.

Kata kunci: Blackwater, Perusahaan Militer Swasta, Amerika, Irak, Hegemoni,

Abstract

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Judul : The Threat of Private Military Company Proliferation towards American Hegemony in Iraq

On September 16, 2007, civilian security contractors working for Blackwater shot and killed 17 Iraqi civilians unprovoked. For most of the world, this brought to light the proliferation of Private Military Companies by the United States Government, especially in Iraq. At the same time, it is conventional wisdom that America has also failed to maintain its hegemony over Iraq, which it had invaded and occupied in 2003. This study investigates the ties between the proliferation of Private Military Companies such as Blackwater and American hegemony in Iraq. The research was conducted through analysis of publicly-available documents regarding American plans and programs in post-war Iraq, as well as documents investigating Blackwater's involvement and conduct within the American security order in Iraq. Analysis found that Blackwater's conduct in Iraq has resulted in decreasing hard power and soft power for the American occupation; the two pillars of hegemony. Blackwater's bad conduct is the result of the company's lack of transparency, government control, and efficiency. This research concludes that Blackwater contributed to the decline of American hegemony in Iraq.

Keywords: Blackwater, Private Military Company, America, Iraq, Hegemony,

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This research will try to explain the phenomenon of American privatization in security, using Blackwater as a subject, and how it impacts America’s hegemony in Iraq between 2003 and 2009. It is hoped that this research could be of some benefit to the reader in realizing the danger posed by these modern-day mercenaries, or at least to inform the reader of what happened in Iraq. The writer realizes that this thesis is not perfect, as there were many shortcomings in the writer’s research partly due to the language barrier, obfuscation of information, and the writer’s own incompetence. Thus, the writer welcomes constructive criticism that will improve the general understanding of the topic.

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List of Acronyms

CBO	: Congressional Budget Office
CPA	: Coalition Provisional Authority
CRS	: Congressional Research Service
IMN	: Iraqi Media Network
IRRF	: Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund
MNC	: Multinational Company
MRAP	: Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
NSS	: National Security Strategy
PMC	: Private Military Company
SEAL	: Sea, Air, and Land
SIGIR	: Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction
SOFA	: Status of Forces Agreement
SUV	: Sports Utility Vehicle
SWAT	: Special Weapons and Tactics
U.S.	: United States
UN	: United Nations
USD	: United States Dollar
USS	: United States Ship
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

VIP : Very Important Person

WMD : Weapon of Mass Destruction

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

America at the time was (and today remains) the strongest state in military matters. The United States Armed Forces is often recognized as the premier fighting force in the world: able to deploy large numbers of combat-ready soldiers in a short period of time; they are also able to field massive quantities of equipment and firepower that would overwhelm most opponents. The American doctrine of war ensures that the U.S. are always better in terms of quality and quantity compared to potential enemies, such as Iraq. Despite American superiority being a widely-accepted fact, the United States still employed the services of PMCs such as Blackwater in areas of interest such as Iraq. By 2009 the United States was employing more civilian contractors than active-duty soldiers in Iraq, by a margin of over 10,000.¹

But how does Blackwater contribute to American hegemony in Iraq in the first place? America has a plethora of interests to protect and goals to achieve in their occupation of Iraq. These can be categorized into 3 ‘tracks’ (as defined by the Bush

¹ Médecins Sans Frontières, “Private Military Companies: Overview of the Phenomenon,” [guide-humanitarian-law.org](https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/private-military-companies/), n.d., <https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/private-military-companies/>.

administration): Security, Economic, and Political.² To achieve the latter two, the United States must have completed the security aspect of its occupation: clearing out areas that the enemy control, holding areas already under control, and rebuilding the Iraqi security apparatus to maintain said control in the long term.³ The second point, the defense of areas under control, is where Blackwater contributes most to American interests: having Blackwater contractors in militarily non-strategic (but still vital) locations such as the embassy in Baghdad or in security details for VIPs frees U.S. soldiers to pursue the first point. Furthermore, policies made by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to disband the Iraqi Army weakened the Iraqi security apparatus and ensured that the third point is a necessity in U.S. strategic interests in Iraq, and therefore increased the value of Blackwater's presence to U.S. hegemony.

What is hegemony? From a Gramscian point of view, which derives from the work of Machiavelli, power is a combination of coercion and consent; domination and willingness.⁴ In this sense, hegemony is the consensual conformity of the ruled towards the ruling; in the context of this research, the consensual conformity of Iraqis towards the United States. While the coercive side of American power in Iraq is always visible, coercion is only reliable to maintain conformity in the short-term, and America

² National Security Council, "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq" (Washington, D.C.: The White House, November 2005).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Robert W. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations : An Essay in Method," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 12, no. 2 (June 1983): 162–75.

requires the consent of the Iraqis to fulfill their long-term goal of nation-building in Iraq.

For a more materialistic definition of Hegemony, Fareed Zakaria defined 'hegemony' as a composite of military, economic, cultural, and ideological strength.⁵ Under that definition, the only state that had that complete package in the late 90s and the early 2000s were the United States.⁶ Economically, the United States were the strongest in the world in the late 90s and early 2000s. Despite fears of being overtaken by Japan and Germany as early as the 1980s, the U.S. economy persisted through multiple crises and remained in the pole position as the economic hegemon with a large gap between it and other countries.⁷ The same could be said of American culture and ideology, so much so that the term 'globalization' in that timeframe became a byword for the penetration of American ideas and values into other countries.⁸ Most importantly, American military hegemony has been established on the global scale since the end of the Cold War removed the only serious competitor (the Soviet Union) and instituted a unipolar world system. Able to project its power anywhere in the world within a short time, no other great power of the time (Russia, France, the United Kingdom) could compete with American power projection.

⁵ Fareed Zakaria, "The Challenges of American Hegemony," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 54, no. 1 (March 1999): 9–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070209905400102>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

By the time Blackwater entered Iraq in August 2003, a national Iraqi government has ceased to exist and has been subsumed by the CPA (and therefore the United States) as the lawful authority in the country. In all sense of the word previously covered, America is the hegemon in Iraq: it had the consensual conformity of the Iraqi population to shape the future government of the country through state-wide political, economic, and security policies. America could begin its nation-building project and gain a willing ally in the region.

The benefit of employing private military companies like Blackwater in Iraq seems like a no-brainer, as by employing contractors in (what was supposed to be) non-combat roles, the U.S. Military could free up thousands of soldiers to be deployed in combat or elsewhere, whether in Iraq or other theatre of conflict. Moreover, the usage of civilian contractors lowers the political cost of the United States' rebuilding of Iraq: their efforts in Iraq has already drawn the biggest anti-war protest in human history, and the deployment of large numbers of active-duty soldiers would further enrage the international community.

1.2 Problem Identification

At midday on September 16, 2007, a massacre occurred in Nisour Square, Baghdad: 17 Iraqi civilians were killed and 20 wounded.⁹ The perpetrators were

⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Blackwater in Baghdad: 'It Was a Horror Movie,'" Human Rights Watch, December 14, 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/12/14/blackwater-baghdad-it-was-horror-movie>.

private contractors of Blackwater Security Consulting, contracted by the United States to bolster their presence in Iraq, specifically in the field of logistics and transportation security. A convoy of Blackwater vehicles were moving through the square when a small car sped towards them, against orders by Iraqi police, and were torn apart by the contractors' small arms fire. Then, they proceeded to open fire against other civilians in the immediate area, claiming that they were shot at from the crowd. Blackwater Security Consulting, under the leadership of CEO Erik Prince, denied responsibility for the massacre, though 4 Blackwater employees who participated in the massacre were later charged and convicted by the federal court.¹⁰

After the Nisour Square incident, American popular support in Iraq has decreased significantly. The enraged Iraqi populace began to demand the recall of U.S. troops and contractors from Iraqi soil by protesting in the streets. An emboldened Iraqi government, which the U.S. has lost control over, immediately began the process of a U.S. withdrawal through the signing of the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in 2008, which stipulates that all U.S. combat personnel will be out of Iraq by the end of 2011.¹¹ Thus, American hegemony in Iraq is no more, and the U.S. has lost a potentially loyal ally in the region. This sharp decline in hegemony within a short

¹⁰ Nicky Woolf, "Former Blackwater Guards Sentenced for Massacre of Unarmed Iraqi Civilians," the Guardian, April 14, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/apr/13/former-blackwater-guardssentencing-baghdad-massacre>.

¹¹ Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, "Toolkit -Legislating for the Security Sector Status of Forces Agreement between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America," 2009, https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/U.S.-Iraqi_SOFA-en.pdf.

amount of time can be attributed to events such as Nisour Square and other equally horrifying incidents.

The level of tension between the Iraqi populace and U.S. affiliates including Blackwater, their mandate to stop potential threats as well as the fact that Blackwater contractors are armed to the same degree as soldiers has led to many incidents of contractors being ‘overzealous’ or ‘trigger-happy.’ Investigations into Blackwater’s conduct after the Nisour Square massacre in Iraq reveals that between 2005 and 2007, Blackwater has been involved in 195 incidents of weapons discharge during a mission, with Blackwater contractors shooting first in the majority of these incidents.¹²

Many have pointed America’s failure in Iraq as one of the causes of its decline in hegemony: it was doomed not by external pressures but by Washington’s own policies. The disbanding of the Iraqi Army and the outlawing of the Ba’ath party by the CPA were one-sided policies made by Washington and they always take the spotlight when experts debate American policy failure in Iraq, but the Author believes that little discussion exists on how the policy of contracting PMCs hurt the American project in Iraq.

¹² House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, “Blackwater USA Hearing before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the One Hundredth and Tenth Congress” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 2, 2007), <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/documents/20071127131151.pdf>. p. 141

One of the concepts within International Relation that is directly linked to Gramscian thought is Robert Nye's *soft power*, where a state can shift the outcome desired by other states not through coercion nor bribery but through attraction and inducement.¹³ This face of power relies not on material capabilities as it is in *hard power*, but rather on immaterial factors such as the culture, values, and institutions of a state, the moral authority of its policies and achievements, as well as the personality of its leaders.¹⁴ It should be noted that *soft power* is not merely the influencing of others, since threats and bribery also achieve that; *soft power* is attraction, where the target will willingly follow a leading state's desires out of consent.¹⁵ Despite their differences, both types of power do not clash against each other. Rather, they are complimentary in nature: they both factor into the ability in changing other actors' behaviors, in a way where a change to one will inevitably also affect the other.¹⁶

In viewing Blackwater's involvement in the Iraq project, the tendency is to view it as a move to bolster American *hard power* within the region. Despite the tendency of policymakers to say otherwise, Blackwater is a fighting force meant to supplement the U.S. Armed Forces, and thus supplement American *hard power* to coercively influence Iraq. But by the logic put forth by Nye, this strengthening of *hard power* affects America's *soft power* projection: The employment of Blackwater in the

¹³ Joseph S Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York City, N.Y.: Public Affairs, 2004). p. 5-7

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

field affects the attractiveness of the American regime. As contractors to the U.S. Government, Blackwater represents American culture and values, as well as the strength of its institutions such as the free market that allowed them to be hired in the first place. Thus, the Nisour Square Massacre, as well as other incidents, tarnishes Iraqi acceptance of American *soft power*.

Despite bolstering American presence in Iraq, Blackwater has instead ruined its hegemony. As explained above, hegemony is not a single-dimensional concept by any definition: hegemony does not only draw from the coercive aspect of ruling, but also from the willingness of those ruled. Whether Blackwater's crimes against the Iraqi people is also America's crimes is outside of the scope of this thesis, but it is undeniable that those crimes alienated the Iraqis from the American occupation.

1.2.1 Scope of Research

This thesis will focus on America's usage of private military companies and how their presence and utilization threaten to undermine American hegemony. Thus, the main actors to be analyzed here include the American government and Blackwater (which goes through many name changes).

Within the American government, we will further analyze President George W. Bush and his administration as the primary instigator of a wave privatization in the early 2000s. Furthermore, we will also include the CPA under Paul Bremer in our analysis of the American government, as it fell under the sway of the U.S. Government

despite being an international effort as well as being the very first employer of Blackwater in Iraq.

The time frame of research will be from August 2003, when Blackwater was first contracted by the CPA in Iraq, to May 2009, when the Iraqi government refused Blackwater a license to operate in Iraqi soil after the Nisour Square massacre.

1.2.2 Research Question

Referring to the background, identification of problem, as well as the restriction put in place, this research thesis seeks to answer the following question: *How did the proliferation of Blackwater become a liability for American Hegemony in Iraq between 2003 and 2009?*

1.3 Research Objective and Significance

The purpose of this research thesis is to offer an explanation on the abnormalities the author finds in America's policy of PMC utilization in Iraq by analyzing said policy through theoretical lenses, as explained later. Over the course of this research, the author seeks to understand America's policy on PMCs and how it threatens America's status as a hegemon. Moreover, it is hoped that this thesis will raise awareness on the proliferation of mercenaries and how it will hurt not only the actors involved, but also the global community in the long run if it continues in its current form.

1.4 Literature Review

This section will be divided into two parts: one on the activities of Blackwater in Iraq, and another on American Hegemony in Iraq, then concluding with the author's own opinions.

The first literature is *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* by award-winning investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill. This book, released in 2007 and revised in 2008 following the Nisour Square Massacre, contains the most comprehensive investigation into the history, inner-working, and activities of the Blackwater, from its very beginning up to its fall following the aforementioned massacre. More importantly, it delves into the high-stakes relationship between the American Government and multi-billion-dollar security companies competing for contracts. The book covers the activities of Blackwater, including in Iraq, to an excruciating detail. Scahill argues that the downsizing of the U.S. Armed Forces following the end of the cold war is the main reason behind the rise of companies such as Blackwater, which started by providing special forces training services following the closure of training centers.¹⁷ Scahill further argues that the American over-reliance on PMCs were too ingrained into the system for any actual effort to curtail it to succeed,

¹⁷ Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (New York, NY: Mjf Books, 2012). p. 93.

and that even if it wanted to the U.S. simply could not replace their services without fighting an uphill battle against their lobbyists in the legislative branch.¹⁸

The second literature is the journal article *Armed Entrepreneurs: Private Military Companies in Iraq* written by James Kwok for the Harvard International Review. Kwok maintains that the proliferation of PMCs is a necessity to maintain American presence in Iraq, due to America's security obligations in the Balkans, Korea, Afghanistan, and elsewhere resulting in a shortage of manpower.¹⁹ He further argues that the presence of PMCs brings considerable expertise in security due to the abundance of veterans working as contractors for these companies, and that their experience is needed to compensate for the lack of manpower in Iraq. Kwok understands the need to regulate PMC proliferation through national laws, as the definition of mercenaries within international law remains in the grey zone. He suggests three avenues of regulation: through national legislation regarding the PMCs' operations abroad, legislation regarding employee background checks to deter unsavory characters, and a formal relation between PMCs and the military to ensure that the PMCs stick to their security work without interfering in military matters and to avoid collateral damage by not involving them in direct combat.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ James Kwok, "Armed Entrepreneurs: Private Military Companies in Iraq," *Harvard International Review* 28, no. 1 (2006): 34–37, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42763082>.

The third literature is the journal article *Blood and Blackwaters: A Call to Arms for the Profession of Arms* by Professor Marcus Hedahl, Ph.D., of the United States Naval Academy. This article explores the immorality of outsourcing military duties and the hypocrisy of justifying mercenary proliferation with economic expedience. Hedahl argues that employing civilian contractors is, contrary to popular belief, detrimental to the economy because the industry has a history of going over the budget, is heavily favorable to larger firms against the principles of free market, has only a single customer, and eventually burdens the taxpayers.²⁰ Further integrating civilian contractors also puts the cohesion, morale, and integrity of the U.S. Armed Forces at risk, as their very presence blurs the line between a soldier and an employee who, by international law, are not lawful combatants. Hedahl positions himself as the voice of U.S. Military academia against the encroachment of the private sector, who would prefer that a clear distinction between soldiers and contractors be made.

From the three literatures we have included, we can draw a general conclusion on the proliferation of PMCs in Iraq: that they are a necessary evil created by the lack of capability on the Americans' part. The argument, then, revolves around their usefulness in Iraq, their damage to the reconstruction, and whether their proliferation succeeded or failed in aiding the U.S. occupation. Scahill suggests that while PMCs like Blackwater has succeeded in providing security but became a liability

²⁰ Marcus Hedahl, "Blood and Blackwaters: A Call to Arms for the Profession of Arms," *Journal of Military Ethics* 8, no. 1 (March 2009): 19–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15027570902781987>.

to the American presence in Iraq, there is nothing that policymakers could do to reverse the Bush administration's deep ties with companies like Blackwater in Iraq, and that the best they could do is minimize PMC activity in the future. Kwok, writing before Nisour Square, suggests that PMCs are needed to maintain American presence, and that any collateral damage could be avoided if the PMC industry is regulated tightly. Hedahl, on the other hand, maintained that PMCs had ruined the reconstruction project's public relations, and lauded against any more integration of contractors in jobs that US soldiers could do.

It is glaringly obvious that virtually all of academia condemns Blackwater's actions in Iraq, though not necessarily linking it the failure of the United States in Iraq itself. Most literature on the subject, Scahill's work for example, focuses on the technical aspect of Blackwater's activities in Iraq and does not delve into how it impacts America's hegemony in Iraq. Going back to our research question, the author has found that while academia agrees that Blackwater badly impacted American presence and standing in Iraq, none delved into *how* and *which* part was impacted.

This is the research gap that will be explored in this thesis. The author is of the initial opinion that the proliferation of PMCs in Iraq was a failure because it turned companies such as Blackwater into liabilities for the American occupation.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

1.5.1 Neoclassical Realism

In explaining the rise of private actors such as Blackwater in an academic field that mainly revolves around the state, we must employ an overarching theory that

grants an analytical space for the influence of non-state actors in the behavior of states. Neoclassical Realism believes that, while secondary to the influence of the international system, internal factors also play a role in shaping foreign policy. A state does not merely change its foreign policy in response to a shift in the international system; rather the international system can cause a change in the domestic situation of a state, which then causes a change in foreign policy.²¹ While it remains a state-centric theory, it is possible for non-state actors such as PMCs to be made a variable in analyzing the foreign policies of states within Neoclassical Realism, whether as an independent variable (as the primary systemic pressure in shifting foreign policy) or as a dependent variable (as a tool of the state in dealing with systemic pressure). By its nature of being beyond state control, systemic pressure is synonymous with external pressure, and every response to an external pressure is met with a reaction of its own, thus creating a cycle of back-and-forth between the international system creating new challenges and policies being made to counter it.²²

While Neoclassical Realism is still at its core a structural theory, it denies that states are simplistic, materially-assessed actors that does not take the ideas of human beings into account.²³ The Grand Strategy Model as conceptualized by Steven

²¹ Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998): 144–72, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0043887100007814>, p. 154

²² Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 1 (January 2010): 117–43, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210509990532>.

²³ *Ibid.*

Lobell and Nicholas Kitchen posits that ‘ideas’ internalized by individuals, institutions and societies are important drivers of policymaking.²⁴ Ideas that powerful individuals hold is the basis of how systems, institutions, and bureaucracies are shaped. A group of individuals sharing the same idea then form groups that advocate for, or implements policies aligning with said idea. Foreign policy is not only shaped by how policymakers interpret threats from the international system into policy, but also by the process of eliminating policies that contradict their ideas. A Grand Strategy in foreign policy is a collection of ideas of what a state should do in an anarchic world; a convergence of both systemic and domestic factors that sets goals for the state to achieve as well as how to achieve it with its resources.²⁵ Since it is a *grand* strategy, it is a long-term plan that can be rolled out for many years. The case of Blackwater’s involvement in Iraq can be explained as the consequence of the idea of privatization that has been shared between powerful individuals within the U.S. Government for decades. Public outcry against the Iraq war, a downsized military, and the logistical nightmare of supplying hundreds of thousands of troops thousands of miles away from home meant that the existence of such mercenaries as a policy option enabled U.S. policymakers to hire the likes of Blackwater in Iraq.

But what are the domestic variables that Neoclassical Realism purports to represent? Under Neoclassical Realism, domestic variables put limitations on the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

policymaking process of central policymakers, interactions between policymakers as well as within society, the mechanism of foreign policy formulation, etc.²⁶ These factors then affect how states respond to systemic pressures. Norrin M. Ripsman classifies 4 different domestic intervening variables that may distort and reshape foreign policy that has already been touched by systemic pressures: leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutional arrangements.²⁷ In this thesis we will utilize the first two.

Leader images are the beliefs and perceptions of individual policymakers in charge of the state's policies: presidents, prime ministers, cabinet members, advisors, etc.²⁸ Leader images are important and inescapable in foreign policy because they affect the perception of incoming systemic pressure – or any external stimuli. Their core values, beliefs, and understanding of the world are shaped by their education and experiences, and in turn become cognitive filters that picks what is important and what is not in new information.²⁹

Strategic culture within neoclassical realism is divided into two camps of experts: scholars who view it as organizational culture and scholars who view it as a

²⁶ Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, "The Scope and Domain of Neoclassical Realism," *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, May 1, 2016, 80–98, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199899234.003.0005>, p. 59-60

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 61

²⁹ Ibid.

broader socio-cultural identity.³⁰ The organizational culture camp, including Jeffrey Legro and Elizabeth Kier, mostly concerns itself with strategic culture derived from the military as a bureaucratic organization, and thus how military culture informs national policy. The cultural camp, including Charles Kupchan, views strategic culture as conceptions and notions of security that take root within the elite and public. Both camps share the idea that strategic culture are made up of beliefs, norms, and assumptions that shape the views of the policymakers and public, and are deeply ingrained in the culture of the state through rules and norms.³¹ Strategic culture itself controls the usage of military power, usage of certain weapons of war, interventionism, etc.³² It can also be reconstructed through evolving governments, historical events, and foreign occupation; Japan's shift from imperialism to democracy post-WWII is one major example. Most importantly, strategic culture constrains policymakers when they undergo changes to meet the demands of systemic pressures, and thus shape foreign policy.

Every realist has a different definition of *Hegemony*, but the general idea is the *concentration of material capabilities in one state, as well as the political strength enabled by said capabilities*.³³ Neoclassical Realists such as Steven Lobell further

³⁰ Ibid. p. 66

³¹ Ibid. p. 67

³² Ibid.

³³ Stephen G Brooks and William C Wohlforth, *World out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton University Press, 2008), <https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/1442169>, 22

granulates this general definition, where a hegemon is a state that dominates several regions of the world at one time and hegemony as the ability for states to enforce its rules and arrangements in a region.³⁴ In an anarchical international system, a dominant power which threatens the survival of any state *is* a hegemon. The rise of a hegemon drives the act of *balancing*, whether externally (in alliances with other states) or internally (strengthening a state's material capability).³⁵ Neoclassical Realists do not refute the definition of Hegemony as outlined above, rather they disagree with the balancing aspect. Relevant to this thesis, Neoclassical Realists such as William Wohlforth points out to the fact that no counterbalancing effort against the U.S. has happened since the fall of the Soviet Union: no alliances between states to counter U.S. hegemony, nor any capability buildup that could counter American supremacy.³⁶

How, then, does a hegemon lose its position on top of the ladder and enter a state of hegemonic decline? Lobell identifies the two sources of hegemonic decline as endogenous and exogenous sources. Endogenous sources are found within the state's internal workings: poor leadership, corruption, economic mismanagement, etc.³⁷ Exogenous sources are causes that forces the state to adapt to a new environment: a change in international politics, new technologies, demographic growth, changing

³⁴ Steven E. Lobell, *The Challenge of Hegemony* (Ann Arbor, M.I.: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 10

³⁵ Ibid. 24-25

³⁶ Ibid. 23

³⁷ Ibid. 14

social norms, bureaucratic reforms, etc.³⁸ Note that Exogenous sources includes but are not synonymous with what realists would call systemic pressure, since environmental changes can also happen within the state without external involvement. Lobell argues that the environment and challengers that a hegemon finds itself going up against will shape the debate between policymaking individuals with different ideas: when going against expansionist states, for example, hawkish policymakers will push for a belligerent posture, which then bolsters the military-industrial complex.³⁹

1.5.2 Security Governance

The author has elected to include the concept of Security Governance as outlined by Elke Krahnmann to further the understanding of *non-state actors* and how their increasing importance in the field of security clashes with the notions of hegemony.

Security Governance itself came to be as an alternative to three of the most popular (and often contradictory) concepts in international security: *balance-of-power*, Stephen Krasner's *security regimes*, as well as Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett's *security communities*. *Balance-of-power* has come into question following disproven predictions that European states will revert back to balancing behavior following the collapse of the USSR and the dissolution of NATO, as the organization outlived the

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. 14

1990s. This lends credence to the latter two, where *security regimes* assume that peace and cooperation between states (such as in post-cold war Europe) occurs because of institutions that set common norms, rules, and expectations followed by states, while *security community* assume that peace and cooperation is achieved through a collective identity forged in institutions. Security Governance criticizes the flaws of the two aforementioned concepts: the fragmentation in goals and methods of newer institutions formed by member states within the framework of older ones, the single-issue nature of these newer institutions, the selective implementation of security frameworks within institutions, and most important of all for this thesis, the increasing proliferation of *non-state actors* in the field of security.

Security Governance posits that security policymaking has shifted from a centralized, state-centric form (*governing*) into a decentralized arrangement which includes the increasing importance of *nonstate actors* (*governance*). In this state of governance, states are still the main unit of analysis, but their relationship with *non-state actors* such as NGOs, PMCs, and MNCs in the field of security are often horizontal.⁴⁰ The shift from ‘governing,’ where the state maintains complete control over security policies, to ‘governance,’ where the state shares responsibility with other actors can be regarded as a loss of hegemony. Therefore, the concept of security governance can also be used to explain how reliance on PMCs can be detrimental to

⁴⁰ Elke Krahnemann, “Conceptualizing Security Governance,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 38, no. 1 (March 2003): 5–26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836703038001001>.

U.S. hegemony. Following the Gramscian definition of hegemony previously explained in this chapter, the proliferation of PMCs such as Blackwater threatens the fragile compliance of Iraqis towards American control in Iraq through two factors, where all three can be explained by the shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance.’

While the prevailing norm suggests that the end of the Cold War brought further integration into international security architectures such as NATO and centralization of authority by states, Security Governance suggests that it instead fragmented authority between different governments, organizations, and private actors. There are several changes within the dimensions of international security framework that necessitated the decentralization of security into ‘governance.’ The end of the Cold War brought changes to the geographical and functional arrangement of old security structures, exemplified by the rise of non-traditional security issues which required the fragmentation of authority for non-state actors, the differentiations in the distribution of resources which incentivized collaborations with non-state actors, the shift in norms that allowed cost-efficiency in security policy by subcontracting the armed services to reduce expenditure, the horizontal decision-making process that included the public and the private sector forming issue-specific networks due to the overload of central government, as well as experimentation with privatization policies in western

countries.⁴¹ It is through this shift from security ‘government’ to ‘governance’ that PMCs came to be proliferated in Europe and North America.⁴²

The core purpose of both security government and governance, though, remains the same: they both seek to tackle security problems to the benefit of states. In that regard, the proliferation of PMCs has been regarded as a failure in security governance. This is due to inconsistencies bred from the inability of certain other dimensions to match the level of change in the dimensions mentioned above (see the previous paragraph) which makes up the shift from governing to governance. These failures can be categorized into two parts, according to their nature: normative failures where changes in policy fails to consider the currently held norms, and practical failures where non-ideational dimensions are mismatched as ideal.⁴³ The proliferation of PMCs is considered a failure due to three factors: A lack of transparency and accountability, a lack of governmental control, and a lack of efficiency.

Lack of transparency refers to a PMC’s tendency to either limit or completely obfuscate public knowledge of their own internal workings. This is enabled by their nature as a private company; they have no obligation to inform the public, only their employers and their government. Because of this, most publicly-available data on PMCs such as Blackwater comes from estimates and secondary sources such as government audits. Lack of accountability also comes from their nature as businesses.

⁴¹ Elke Krahnemann, “Conceptualizing Security Governance,”

⁴² Elke Krahnemann, “Security Governance and the Private Military Industry in Europe and North America,” *Conflict, Security & Development* 5, no. 2 (August 2005): 247–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800500170209>.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

While they are employed by the government, they also have no obligation to be responsible to the public, since they are a business and not directly controlled by the public through the government. Though their contracts are paid by taxpayer money, they are not accountable to the taxpayer.

Lack of government control, as the name implies, refers to their independence in operating as a private company. The U.S. Government, though nominally its employer and bankroller, has no right to directly alter the inner workings of a private enterprise such as Blackwater as it holds no stake in the company, which is the very essence of *laissez-faire* economics protected by the U.S. Constitution. In essence, the U.S. Government can contract Blackwater to do something and guide it in how to achieve it, but Blackwater reserves the right to choose the personnel, equipment, strategy, procedures, etc. Therefore, the proliferation of PMCs in Iraq also brought in wildcards that the U.S. government had no control over.

Meanwhile, lack of efficiency refers to a PMC's inability to operate within the standards set forth by their employers. This does not necessarily mean that they performed their job they're contracted to do badly, rather it means that the way they achieved their objectives and their day-to-day non-contract operations are subpar. As the biggest bureaucracy in the world, the U.S. Government requires that every facet of government dealings be recorded, including the operations of their contractors in Iraq. A lack of efficiency by PMCs in this regard means that these companies exaggerate certain things and underreport certain events in order to keep costs low.

1.6. Research Method, Data Collection & Data Analysis

1.6.1. Research Method

For the general outline of this research, the Author will utilize a qualitative research method. Qualitative research means different things to different researchers, but can be succinctly defined as a collection of interpretative techniques that helps researchers come to terms with the subject of research through the meaning, rather than the numbers, of the data from various phenomenon in the social world.⁴⁴ The Author has chosen this method as he believes that the context behind the data, as well as the narrative that the data tells, contributes greater to the conclusion rather than the numbers themselves.

Qualitative research has 4 characteristics that differentiate it from other methods.⁴⁵ First, it focuses on process, meaning, and understanding; qualitative research burdens itself with the process, rather than the result. Second, the researcher is the primary instrument for both data collection and analysis, as a human researcher could perceive the minute details that other instruments could not, though this could also lead to biases. Third, the research is conducted in an inductive manner; the research is done because existing theories fail to adequately explain a phenomenon, and thus the researcher gathers data to build new conclusions rather than reinforce an

⁴⁴ Sharan B Merriam and Elizabeth J Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Cop, 2016). 14-15

⁴⁵ Ibid.

existing one. Fourth, the end product is vivid descriptive, relying on words and pictures rather than numbers to tell of the conclusion the researcher arrived at.

1.6.2 Data Collection & Analysis

The main source of data for this research will be secondary data in the form of documents pertaining to the topic at hand. These will be in the form of journal articles, news reports, government reports, and especially documents from the Congressional Research Service and congressional hearing reports. The first step in data collection is finding these documents, through a systematic procedure of inquiries in both physical spaces such as libraries, as well as online spaces such as government archives and such.⁴⁶ Second, the validity of a document must be verified; a researcher must verify the origin, the author, the completeness of information within, possible bias, whether it is a primary or secondary source, etc.⁴⁷ The dissertation of the documents themselves will be done through a process of content analysis. Simply, content analysis is a technique that allows the analysis of unstructured data to view meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive content within as well as the communicative roles they have in the data's sources.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid. 175-176

⁴⁷ Ibid. 176-178

⁴⁸ Ibid. 178-179

1.7. Systematics of Studies Model

This research will be sub-divided into 4 chapters, each discussing certain important aspects of the topic. The division is as follows:

Chapter I, the introduction, contains the following: a background of the issue to capture interest from the reader by pointing out the most controversial incident involving PMCs in Iraq, problem identification of how PMCs threaten U.S. Hegemony, scope of research, research question, research objective and significance, literature review, theoretical framework, research method, data collection and analysis method, and systematics of studies.

Chapter II contains the profile of the United States of America, including their grand strategy for Iraq as well as their post-war plan for reconstruction Iraq. It will also contain the profile of Blackwater as a major contractor for the U.S. during the period, including their capabilities and procedures, atrocities committed by their employees, and their immunity from prosecution.

Chapter III will be divided into 3 parts: defining the form of American hegemony in Iraq, analyzing Blackwater as a liability in American Grand Strategy through their benefits in hard power but also detriments in both hard power and soft power, and Analyzing Blackwater as a liability in Security Governance through three governance failures.

Chapter IV will conclude the research and answer the research question