

**BOOK REVIEW**  
(by Dr Andrei Pritvorov)

**"PEACE, PROFIT OR PLUNDER? THE PRIVATISATION OF SECURITY IN WAR-TORN AFRICAN SOCIETIES" - Jakkie Cilliers and Peggy Mason (Eds) (Halfway House, Institute for Security Studies, 1999) 245 pp.**

The book under review contains a preface, 11 chapters, maps and an annex. The material proceeds from papers originally presented by the authors to the Conference held in Pretoria in March 1998 on "Profit and plunder: the privatisation of war and security in Africa", and later processed within the framework of the Institute of Security Studies (ISS, South Africa) and the Canadian Council for International Peace and Security (CCIPS, Canada) and due to financial contributions made by the Swedish Government, the McArthur Foundation and the government of Canada.

The resulting monograph reflects the purpose "to enhance human security in Africa", to present "an independent, informed and reliable voice" and "innovative policies", as it is said in the preface, on the main topic of the private security industry (PSI), "particularly 'corporate mercenaries' ... at the behest of corrupt politicians and exploitative businessmen" (p. 1), and as J Cilliers writes in chapter 1, "Private security in war-torn African states".

Chapter 2, "Africa, military downsizing and the growth of private security industry" by P Lock, is interesting in the assessment of the subject especially from the standpoint of comparative analysis of the PSI, taking the histories of German military experts' involvement in China, and Russian and US experiences of "gated communities" (pp. 11-14, 18, 27 and 29) into consideration. The latter represents direct oligarchic influence of private monopolistic groups on the way of life of local élites, or their substitutes. He notes, inter alia, that "most actors worked towards forming homogeneous nation-states throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead, in the age of globalisation, control over commerce has become the key demarcation of political power, especially when trading in the global market. The classical nation-state may therefore be relegated to a back seat in the reorganisation of Africa's political economy and the ensuing new political map. The major powers are not likely to defend the territorial status quo provided their interests are not endangered by the changes" (p. 17). Happily, trade is only a small, though significant, part of political economy, physical economy in particular, and from the point of view of the latter the major powers are interested in the maintenance of the status quo, which is the precondition for

future development, which is aimed at using their military personnel (such as the corps of engineers) to that effect instead of dispersing qualified military professionals, no longer loyal to any goal (national and affidavit), but to a current interest only (money, food, etc.), over Africa and elsewhere as PSIs or dangerous "dogs of war".

Historically, being a warrior is a way of life, a hierarchy among six other fundamental hierarchies, supporting any identity, and not "a profession" (there are many military professions), and according to the tradition, he (or she) should be limited psychologically: not to take up arms against his own authority and population who are taking care of him (or her).

The idea that the PSI is "multibillion dollar business" is closely linked to the concept of "turbulent countries" (p. 2), which both form "a vicious circle" of violence in Africa dating back to the early sixties. The present situation is especially grave in Angola and the neighbouring countries, where the involvement of international military formations and the PSI as peacekeepers proved to be of little avail - see chapter 8 by S Cleary, "Angola - a case study of private military involvement" and chapter 3 by M Malan, "The crisis in external response", since a number of Western countries, while promoting the idea of "privatising" peacekeeping... failed to provide a viable recipe for Boutros-Ghali's ill-conceived concept of "peace enforcement" (p. 37) and, on the other hand, "there is no place for sale of private services which encourage one side, or the other, to believe it can benefit from further violent military clashes" (p. 167).

Chapter 7 by Alex Vines, "Gurkhas and the private security business in Africa" dwells upon the activities of a specific PSI unit where soldiers from Nepal are enlisted, making up British Gurkha brigades. The author deals with Gurkha Security Guards whose mine-cleaning services were helpful in Mozambique and Angola, but unsuccessful in Sierra Leone (pp. 123 and 130).

Chapter 9, "Fighting for diamonds - private military companies in Sierra Leone" by I Douglas, partly discloses the true motives for local clashes to become "externalised" - to use P Lock's term, in that country, but even more so in Angola: the control of resources, which are the main object of dispute. No wonder that the staff of the Executive Outcomes (EO) and the "diverse range of hidden corporate, financial and political powers that fund their operations" (p. 83), whose activities K Pech has studied so well in chapter 5, "Executive Outcomes - A corporate conquest", prefer barter payment: "peace for diamonds". "Where will the proliferation of the storm-troopers for the global mineral and oil companies bring us tomorrow?" - she asks on p. 105, and gives the answer that, "already in 1998 and 1999, civil conflict has spread across Africa and started a transcontinental war". It is possible to add to the answer by referring to lord H Kitchener's deep belief that "big business" was responsible for the Second Anglo-Boer War (see: Kandyba-Foxcroft, *Russia and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-*

1902, Pretoria, 1981, p. 141), which was the first modern "resource war" centered at those times around the world's "gold rush" of the "happy nineties", after the Bank of England had demanded more gold to provide for the maintenance of the gold standard already affected by excessive issuing of bank notes. That looked much like the current global financial crisis (e.g. on p. 20: "manipulation, such as bringing printed money into circulation on behalf of kleptocratic leaders")... One might also refer to the statement made by the former Nazi minister of armaments, A Speer, during his interrogation in 1945 that, indisputably, the need for oil was the most important cause of the war against Russia (see **Oil and gas of Russia. History and perspectives**, Moscow-Geneva Kres/AMS, 1995, p. 53-4 - in Russian). Ways and means to promote further redistribution of resources are now tested in Africa and then used elsewhere.

J Cilliers and J Douglas are right while pointing out in chapter 6, "The military business-professional resources incorporated", "This, of course, does not reduce the requirement for mechanisms designed to provide the checks and balances essential when analysing 'armed force' to foreign policy" (p. 119). By the way, the first PSI formation was equipped, deployed and employed in Southern Africa as early as in 1895 by LS Jameson who represented C Rhodes' British South Africa Company - the BSAC. And it is in no way accidental that Lonrho and De Beers, as part of the Anglo-American financial group (pp. 6, 7, 14, 127 et al.), which are heirs to the BSAC, have been using PSI for more than a century.

The way the PSI is used is the subject of analysis presented by many collapsed or semi-collapsed African states. Leaders of local communities are also using PSI, albeit to a lesser extent. R Cornwell, in chapter 4, "The collapse of the African state", truly notes that "the world is afflicted by a growing number of intrastate conflicts, apparently of racial, religious and ethnic derivation. A growing number of civilians, as opposed to armies and security forces, are becoming involved in this violence, often for no obvious or clearly articulated political reason" (p. 61).

But the escape from existing calamities and future dares, evidently, lies in the hands of a tiny faction of the African élite, who is able to find ways and means to creatively combine local and external influences of the past and of the present to restore order in their respective nation-states by assuming a positive vision of life: education (including re-education of the military professionals) and promoting development projects. Of course, the international community's duty is to take part in that process, involving issues of private security.

Y Sandoz, in chapter 10, "Private security and international law" is presenting views on PSI from a retrospection of discussions at the UN and OAU on the legal statuses of combatants, mercenaries and, inter alia, notes, that "there is nothing to prevent lawmakers from prescribing a more severe penalty for a foreign combatant

motivated by the prospect of gain" (p. 208). But one should not forget that the moral distinction between both lies not in "gain" itself, but as it was said above, in the nature of the warrior - either serving a national goal or merely an interest. And in this light the author is right in questioning whether PSIs are able or unable to "assume some of the responsibilities incumbent on the state" (p. 211).

And, lastly, J Cilliers and R Cornwell, in chapter 11, "Africa - from the privatisation of security to the privatisation of war", dwell upon the extension of armed conflicts in Africa, especially in its sub-Saharan part, where, of 42 countries, a third are involved in hostilities. They note that "large multinational corporations do not want to be associated with political conflict in their political environments and have every reason to end such conflicts" (p. 228). "It does seem evident, however", the authors conclude, "that companies and entrepreneurs - if they can command reliable private military assistance - will be in a better position to negotiate concessions than other businesses without such connections" (p. 229). That is perfectly true. But, in order to negotiate wider and with more confidence, then, as an exception, in case they are really willing to put an end to the spread of the continental and world disaster, they will have to form, again, the same as in 1985, during the unrests in South African townships, something like a "Business United Front" or BUF, and come out in the open as a political force, i.e. as if they were a body of citizens of the countries where their enterprises are operating.

The book, to which the editors and the authors gave so much time and effort, deserves the highest praise. Great experience and expertise are evident in its every chapter. Those students, researchers, politicians or amateurs who give themselves a leisure to read at least some portion of it, will look at the surrounding world and at their own role in it from a better standpoint.