Corporate Warriors: The State and Changing Forms of Private Armed Force in America

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Abstract
In recent years, and especially with the war in Iraq, the U.S. military's reliance on private contractors as forces in the theater of war has grown and become increasingly clear. We critically evaluate some of the best literature on the emergence of this phenomenon – especially Ken Silverstein's Private Warriors and P. W. Singer's Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry – and find a neglect of the historical path-dependent character of the rise of the new corporate armed forces. In particular, we concentrate on American experience and two silences that are integral to understanding the path-dependent character of this process: (1) earlier historical reliance on private armed force to suppress the labor movement in America, the template for this new form of irregular armed force and (2) the ghost of Vietnam as a continuing political liability in the mobilization of sufficient troop levels under neo-imperialist aspirations and "the global war on terror," as the main condition for the rise of the new private military form. Both elements suggest the theoretical importance of state strength/weakness in any explanation of private armed force. We discuss several important political implications of our findings.

Citation

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