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“GlobalViolence”: a Research Network and Web Archive of Resources to Study Violence

1. Introduction

In the post-bipolar world, the emergence of private *and of* privatised violence¹ is a significant phenomenon, especially compared to the distinctive features of previous times. An increasing number of individuals, groups and organisations are involved in this phenomenon in different ways. Some explicit manifestations of this general trend are visible in the emergence of the privatised military industry, and in that of terrorist and criminal networks. For instance, in the 1990s, as now, private militaries played a key role in the Sierra Leone conflict, as they are doing in the Iraqi war. Similar examples of the other two kinds of organisation may be found. Aside from specific cases, the main scientific interest lies in noting some global features. One of these features, which may be considered both characteristic of and common to all these actors, can be interpreted in an economic perspective and may be called “the market of violence”:

Mafias, terrorist networks, and private military corporations today represent the main hallmarks of a renewed private industry of violence. Mafias incessantly reproduce the original (and violent) accumulation of resources at the local level, investing the profits in the global market. Here they become long-range traders – a role of primary importance for the capitalistic economy – able to move (mainly illicit) goods and money. Terrorists contribute to feeding the security market, selling to marginalised groups the illusion of future access to the political arena, and obtaining in exchange an immediate sacrifice. Military corporations produce wealth for both themselves and their customers through the sale of their services [...]. The main features which differentiate these three actors guarantee that they do not compete among themselves: *mafiosi* and mercenaries generally use violence in a more instrumental way, leaving to terrorists the use of violence for more typically subversive ends (at either the domestic or the international level). But there are some analogies, especially related to the compartmental structure (subdivided into clans, cells, or combat units) of

¹ We intend to point to both the rising role of private violence in today’s world, *and* to the increasing privatisation of former public quotas of violence.

all these organisations. Overlapping may occur when tools typical of one of them are used by another: e.g. when Mafia clans put into practice massacre strategies, or when terrorists groups finance themselves through drug-trafficking (Armao 2006).

Another interesting common aspect is legitimation. All these actors claim a legitimate use of violence, in direct contrast with the role of the modern state. This could be interpreted as breaking the established Weberian paradigm of state monopoly over the legitimate use of force, and many theoretical works deal with this subject². Theories may diverge on the evaluation of this phenomenon, but most of them converge on its existence.

This contribution does not intend to take part in this academic debate, its goal being of a different kind. The *GlobalViolence* database, now in the phase of completion, aims to provide a tool, bringing together and linking existing secondary sources on the privatisation of violence, in order to facilitate the production of all kinds of research. However, *GlobalViolence* not only provides access to data about violence, but its main feature is the possibility of *crossing information*.

2. A Comprehensive Overview of the Project

GlobalViolence is part of the bigger “Global Politics Lab” project, launched in 2003 at the “Centro Einaudi” in Turin³, co-ordinated by Fabio Armao and Anna Caffarena:

Operationally speaking, in line with institutional and other players operating in an analogous context locally, nationally and in other countries, the *Laboratorio di Poltica Globale* intends to promote the diffusion of internationalist culture and multidisciplinary research into the principal points on the international political agenda (...) It is not enough to replace the old term “international politics” with “global politics” in order to avoid the obligation to explore the dynamics that globalisation has triggered, especially in the political sphere. To draw a full, methodical picture of the world of politics, to a greater or lesser extent transformed by globalisation, is thus a necessary condition if we are to produce useful reflection on the role and quality of politics in the

² e.g. Hall - Biersteker 2002; Josselin - Wallace 2001.

³ For more information on the Centre, see its website: www.centroeinaudi.it, which also includes a list of activities organised within the LPG (Laboratorio di Poltica Globale).

world that is taking shape. This is precisely what the *Laboratorio di Politica Globale* is striving to do⁴.

In 2005, Fabio Armao had the idea of creating a database of private violence, deciding to develop this idea because of the relevance that the topic has acquired in recent years⁵. It is not always easy to keep track of specific elements through the various available sources, nor to go through them rapidly when the need for research on a specific sub-topic arises. *GlobalViolence* provides a tool to meet these needs, i.e. an instrument of systematic data gathering and analysis. *GlobalViolence* differs from other databanks because it is not only a bibliographical archive – i.e. a collection of organised sources integrated with a search engine⁶. It also provides a synthesis of the main data included in each source, and the means to cross-link them. In this way it is possible not only to search for a specific element in the abstracts, but also to check for cross-references about facts, years, geographic locations, individuals, organisations and crimes.

GlobalViolence is aimed at researchers, not only IR scholars but also economists, sociologists, anthropologists and others. Its main aim is to present a multidisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of private violence and, by summarising and connecting the facts of all included sources, to facilitate research, as will be explained below.

3. *GlobalViolence* Handbook

This paragraph is essentially for those who intend to use the database. It explains how to use the *GlobalViolence* search engine and how the results are organised and displayed. *GlobalViolence* is in English, but includes sources in other languages (so far French, Italian and Russian). The original titles are used in the “title” field (see below) but an English translation is given in the “notes” field, to aid researchers.

The database is subdivided into three topics: organised crime, mercenarism and terrorism. These reflect the main aspects of today’s private violence and were chosen for this reason.

⁴ Giuseppina De Santis (Manager of the Centro Einaudi), welcoming remarks at the LPG opening lecture in November 2003.

⁵ Much of Armao’s research work is focused on this issue, see for example Armao 2000.

⁶ For an example, see the *Organized Crime and Corruption Bibliographic Database Search* of the Nathanson Centre on Transnational Human Rights, Crime and Security, on <http://www.yorku.ca/nathanson/search.htm>.

Search

Type of search List of sources List of datas

Freetext

Source

Author

Approach

Topic

search

Group

Individual

Crime

Macroarea

Country

As may be seen, the search page is relatively complex. At least one field must be filled, but several fields may also be filled for a single search. The engine organises the results based upon the search criteria and shows them logically. Data display will be discussed below ; the fields comprising the search page will first be examined.

The search page is divided into two main sections. The left-hand column includes the basic tools usually present in any search engine of a book-related database. the fields are used as follows.

Freetext: in this field the researcher can input any data he/she wishes, as in any web search engine. The *GlobalViolence* engine searches for the word(s) through all available material and presents each occurrence of the word(s).

Source: this field allows the researcher to choose the type of sources he/she is interested in. *GlobalViolence* includes four main types of source: books (including anthologies and collective works), scientific articles published in journals, papers produced by various research institutes, and official documents. By selecting one of

these sources – through a scroll-down menu⁷ – the user can focus on one type at a time.

A screenshot of a search interface with a yellow background. It contains five search filters, each with a label and a corresponding input field: 'Freetext' with a text box, 'Source' with a scroll-down menu, 'Author' with a text box, 'Approach' with a scroll-down menu, and 'Topic' with a scroll-down menu.

Author: this is a freetext field where the user can write an author's name in part or in full. The search engine will display all sources in the database that have the same string included in the “author” field.

Approach: this scroll-down menu allows the user to choose among different analytical approaches, e.g. anthropology or political science. If needed, it is possible to select more than one of these approaches at the same time, using the CTRL key.

Topic: as was said, *GlobalViolence* is organised around the three pillars of contemporary private violence. The “topic” scroll-down menu allows the user to select one of them: organised crime, mercenarism or terrorism.

The right-hand column of the form shows the additional features that make *GlobalViolence* a unique research tool. Only advanced users are allowed access to these features, i.e. users whom have subscribed for the access of these features.

A screenshot of advanced search filters with a yellow background. It contains five scroll-down menus, each with a label: 'Group', 'Individual', 'Crime', 'Macroarea', and 'Country'.

Group/Individual/Crime: these three fields operate similarly and will be discussed together. They are scroll-down menus, in each of which one element may be selected at a time. More specifically, the “group” list comprises non-public organisations that have dealt (directly or indirectly) with private violence; similarly, the “individual” list consists of persons involved in private violence but outside their public career, if any; the “crime” list is simply a list of different kinds of illicit

activities which have been related to private violence.

⁷ The selection is from among: Book, journal, document, paper.

Macro-area/Country: the user can select the macro-area from a scroll-down list, and then the country from the list below, or may simply leave the second field blank. In the first case, the results provided will relate only to the selected country, while in the second case the results will include sources naming any of the countries in the selected macro-area.

Sources/Facts: this option allows the user to choose between two different organisational criteria for the output provided: it can be listed by “source” (the default setting) or by “fact”. If the first option is selected, the result will list sources containing the criteria entered in the search page; if the “facts” option is chosen, then the list will be of facts (with links to sources) relating to the criteria entered in the search page. This means that data can be gathered on a specific instance, and thus, for example, enables a contextual case study to be developed. This feature is one of the most significant aspects distinguishing the *GlobalViolence* database.

Type of search List of sources List of datas

The fields offered by the search engine are not mandatory: as was said, it is sufficient to complete one field (and its content may be extremely generic, as is the case with “freetext”). However, if more search criteria are provided, the engine will sort the results based on a relevance standard.

Individual Barlow, Eben

Group: Executive Outcomes

Macroarea : Africa

Search results (15)

- Singer, Peter W. *Corporate Warriors. The Rise of the privatized Military Industry* (100%)
- Adamo, Antonino *I nuovi mercenari* (100%)
- Shearer, David *Outsourcing War* (100%)
- Shearer, David *Private Armies and Military Intervention* (100%)
- House of Commons (UK) *Private Military Companies: Options for Regulation* (100%)
- Isenberg, David *Soldiers of Fortune Ltd.: A Profile of Today's Private Sector Corporate Mercenary Firms* (100%)
- Muthien, Bernedette; Taylor, Ian *The Return of the Dogs of War? The Privatization of Security in Africa* (100%)
- Mandel, Robert *Armies Without States. The Privatization of Security* (66%)
- Singer, Peter W. *Corporate Warriors. The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and Its Ramifications for International Security* (66%)
- Singer, Peter W. *L'industria militare privata e i nuovi mercenari* (66%)
- Coker, Cristopher *Outsourcing War* (66%)
- Singer, Peter W. *Peacekeepers, Inc.* (66%)
- Avant, Deborah D. *The Market for Force. The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (66%)
- Adams, Thomas K. *The New Mercenaries and the Privatization of Conflict* (66%)
- Lilly, Damian *The Privatization of Security and Peacebuilding: a Framework for Action* (66%)

Individual Barlow, Eben

Group: Executive Outcomes

Macroarea : Africa

Search results (38)

(Full Details) Description: Executive Outcomes (EO) was founded by Eeben Barlow in Pretoria, in 1989. Most of EO workforce was coming from SADF (South African Defence Force) veterans. The first major EO's contract was in Angola, in May 1993. The Angolan government hired 500 private personnel, from September 1993 to January 1996, to train about 5,000 soldiers. Costs are estimated for about \$40 million a year, including weaponry. EO's arrival did a great deal in reversing the situation and in defeating the UNITA. In May 1995 EO was hired by the Sierra Leonean government, for 22 months and at a total cost of \$35 million. The company successfully won over the RUF rebel movement. In 1997 EO was subcontracted by Sandline International to train and plan military operation against the BRA in Papua New Guinea. EO was formally introduced to the governments of Angola and Sierra Leone by Anthony Buckingham, director of Heritage Oil & Gas. Both Buckingham and EO officials denied any relation between the private military company and Branch-Heritage.

Year: 1989

Individuals: Buckingham, Anthony; Barlow, Eben

Groups: UNITA; Sandline International; BRA; RUF; Branch-Heritage; Executive Outcomes

Places: Africa [Angola]; Africa [Sierra Leone]; Oceania [Papua New Guinea]

(3)

(Full Details) Description: The Executive Outcomes experience is recalled, listing briefly characters proper of its structure, personnel, and hardware. About operations, the Sierra Leone intervention from 1995 onward is cited. The firm was hired by the government to face the RUF (Rebel United Front) rebels, and regain control of important mining sites. In ten months EO secured peace in the country, and allowed for the first elections after 23 years to take place.

Year: 1995

Groups: RUF; Executive Outcomes

Places: Africa [Sierra Leone]

(2)

(Full Details) Description: The involvement of the South-African firm Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone is a common examples among those advocating for privatized peacekeeping. Deploying a battalion sized force (of few hundreds individuals) and its own military hardware, the firm was able to beat the rebels of the RUF in a few weeks, allowing for free elections in 1998. The following U.N. intervention, even being considerably larger and better funded took several years of operations and a rescue from the British military to achieve similar results.

Year: 1995

Groups: Executive Outcomes

Places: Africa [Sierra Leone]

(2)

(Full Details) Description: After a coup that overthrown the civilian government of Sierra Leone in May 1997 and the spreading of general violence throughout the country, the president-in-exile decided to hire the British private military firm Sandline International to bring some order in the country and to get back in power. Rakesh Saxena, a former Thai banker, was willing to finance Sandline operations and promised \$ 10 million. Branch-Heritage and Strategic Resources Corporation (SRC) were also linked to this operation and still had strong interests in the region. In order to achieve its goals Sandline shipped 300 tons of weapons to Sierra Leone, so violating a U.N. imposed embargo and involving the British Foreign Ministry in the so-called "Sandline Affair".

Year: 1998

Individuals: Saxena, Rakesh

Groups: Strategic Resources Corporation; Sandline International

Places: Africa [Sierra Leone]

Crimes: weapons smuggling

(1)

The general principle is that of “50% + 1”, that is, the search engine will display only results which are consistent with at least one bit more than the 50% of the search criteria specified by the user. Sources and facts including all the criteria specified will be shown before the less relevant ones. This should make it possible to concentrate on elements that are more closely related to the topic investigated. Relevance scores are shown next to the elements, in the output list. A percentage in the case of sources (must be greater than 50%), a cardinal number in the case of facts (showing how many criteria match the case displayed, given its inclusion in a source with a relevance greater than 50%).

While the previous lists of sources and facts are quite self-explanatory, some details may be of interest concerning how each source is presented. This will also clarify how facts are presented.

As may be seen, the result is subdivided into two main sections. The first provides typical bibliographical data about the source. The actual fields vary, depending on the type of source (book, journal, paper, or document), but many of them (e.g. author, title, abstract) are always present.

Source detail

Inserted by Ruzza - 19 Nov 2006 21:45:31 GMT; Last modified by Ruzza - 28 May 2007 11:21:26 GMT

Source kind: Book

Author: Avant, Deborah D.

Title: The Market for Force. The Consequences of Privatizing Security

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

City of publication: Cambridge - New York

Year of publication: 2005

ISBN: 0521615356

Detailed source description: The author focuses her attention over the recent privatization of security and the consequent creation of what she defines a real "market for force". In evaluating such a market the author suggests a complex analytical framework integrating tools from different disciplines, i.e. economics, political science, and sociology (chapters I and II). These tools are then used in evaluating different dimensions of the phenomenon, i.e. the role of the state as a customer for private security (chapter III), the role of the state as a regulator for the market of force (chapter IV), and the role of private actors as customers of this same market (chapter V). A matrix for evaluating functional, political, and social control in each case is provided. The last chapters deal about relations between market mechanisms and the control of force, then finally some general conclusions are presented. Another interesting feature of this work is the extension and re-elaboration of Peter Singer's industry classification model.

Topic: Private military firms

Keywords: Sociology, Political Science, Economics

 Eliminate

 Enter new data

 Search data to associate

Associated data:

■ **Description:** In considering the state as a customer of the market for force three case-studies are analyzed. The first of them is about the involvement of private security companies (PSCs) in Sierra Leone during the '90s. In January 1995 Valentine Strasser, Sierra Leone's President, hired Gurkha Security Guards (GSG) to help repel the mounting RUF (Rebel United Front) offensive and to train some of the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF). After falling in a dramatic ambush and losing some key personnel GSG decided to pull out of the country, and finally left in April. Meanwhile in March, Strasser hired Executive Outcomes, a South-African PSC, to take the role formerly of GSG. Actually, executives from a mining company - Branch Energy - introduced Strasser to EO. Micheal Grunberg was among those executives. EO successfully was up to the task. The company included among its tools not only sophisticated weaponry and tactics, but also the training of a local hunters tribe, the Kamajors, in counter-insurgency. During EO intervention a coup took place (replacing Strasser with Maada-Bio), then elections followed in February 1996: Ahmed Kabbah won them. In January 1997 EO withdrew from the country, having received \$ 15.7 million for her services (from a \$ 35.3 million contract). Foreign mining companies helped in financing EO by the mean of mineral concessions granted by the government.

Year: 1995

Individuals: Grunberg, Micheal

Groups: Executive Outcomes; Gurkha Security Guards; Branch-Heritage; Kamajors; RUF

Places: Africa [Sierra Leone]



■ **Description:** After EO's leave the security condition in Sierra Leone soon deteriorated again and President Kabbah was overthrown by a coup. Nigerian peacekeepers of the ECOMOG were unable to regain some kind of control, so the president-in-exile decided in 1997 to hire the Tim Spicer led Sandline International, to help in train and equip a militia of 40,000 Kamajors, and do other related tasks as well. Financing from the operation was coming from private sources, i.e. the Thai banker

The second section presents the facts associated with the sources, in a logical manner, depending on how the author originally dealt with them, e.g. if a whole chapter is devoted to studying a specific issue through different events, these will either be reported in a single case if possible, or if not will be separated so as to respect the underlying links.

■ **Description:** After a coup that overthrown the civilian government of Sierra Leone in May 1997 and the spreading of general violence throughout the country, the president-in-exile decided to hire the British private military firm Sandline International to bring some order in the country and to get back in power. Rakesh Saxena, a former Thai banker, was willing to finance Sandline operations and promised \$ 10 million. Branch-Heritage and Strategic Resources Corporation (SRC) were also linked to this operation and still had strong interests in the region. In order to achieve its goals Sandline shipped 300 tons of weapons to Sierra Leone, so violating a U.N. imposed embargo and involving the British Foreign Ministry in the so-called "Sandline Affair".

Year: 1998

Individuals: Saxena, Rakesh

Groups: Sandline International; Strategic Resources Corporation

Places: Africa [Sierra Leone]

Crimes: weapons smuggling



Each fact is constructed as an independent entity. It includes a brief summary of the fact itself, a list of related groups, individuals, and crimes. If the fact has a specific chronological dimension, a relevant year is provided: the year in which the fact took place, if it occurred within a single year, or the year in which the fact began if it lasted longer. Country and macro-area are also indicated, if they are relevant. It is interesting that, by clicking on any of the elements listed, a list of other sources related to that same element can be accessed.

The interconnected way that sources are organised and their contents accessed in the *GlobalViolence* database is extremely useful, since it can highlight links among different scientific papers that concern the relevant elements.

4. Methodology

Having described how *GlobalViolence* can be used, its underlying methodology will now be discussed. This will illustrate how the database has been built, and clarify the results provided by the search engine. This section is a sort of “advanced integration” to the “handbook” given in the previous paragraph.

One of the first points to clarify concerns the choice of type of source. Why have only secondary sources been included? Simply because a database dealing with primary sources (e.g. newspaper or newsmagazine articles, information available on websites, etc.) must be structured quite differently and, to be effective, must be updated daily. It is also difficult to combine the two kinds of database (secondary and primary sources) logically. The focus is thus on secondary works, which are more reliable and better suited for scientific research. The inclusion of other kinds of

sources in future is left open. This also enables those building the database to create clearer inclusion criteria.

Again concerning contents, *GlobalViolence* reflects the scientific specialisation of the researchers working on it (organised crime, mercenarism, terrorism, in their different embodiments). This enables more meaningful sources to be selected, since the most important works on each topic are inserted progressively into the databank. However, the general principle behind *GlobalViolence* is inclusive: the bigger the database, the greater its utility. Quantitative growth is the main work in progress on the databank at present.

Coming now to specific methodological issues. Some of the following points only involve establishing a rule that simplifies readability (e.g. deciding to show names in the “surname, name” format), while others are based on deeper considerations. Only aspects characterised by some interesting features are discussed, leaving aside obvious details (e.g. the name of the publisher).

Names: all names included in *GlobalViolence* are presented as follows: *surname, name (plus initial of middle name, if any)*. This holds both for the names of authors and for those of individuals on the “individual” list. Some ambiguity may arise with non-English names, especially those transliterated from non-Latin alphabets. In this case, the choice falls upon the version of the name in most widespread use in the English-language literature and press. The same applies to cases in which a nickname has gained overwhelming use over the formal name. These criteria aim to facilitate recognition of people, and to ensure they are included univocally in the database. It also improves readability of small fields and scroll-down menus. However, in the case of the use of nicknames or similar, the full name is also included – whenever possible – in the general description of the fact or in the source (and vice-versa).

Titles and editions: English editions are used preferentially, even if they are not the original ones. In the latter case, the original title of the work is given in the “Notes” field. If no English edition is available, the title field gives the title in the original language (non-Latin alphabets being transliterated). A straight translation of the title is added in the “Notes” field to simplify research. In these cases all associated data are nevertheless in English. Since the *GlobalViolence* project was born in Italy, the “Notes” field always provides information about Italian editions, if they exist.

Collective works: these are dealt with in two different ways. If only some of the studies included are related to private violence, these are presented separately, since the main focus of the collective work is not of interest. On the other hand, if the anthology deals mainly with the topic of private violence (i.e., if more than half the essays are about this topic) the work is presented as a whole.

ISBN: the ten-digit ISBN code has been chosen as standard. However, when only the thirteen-digit version is available, this is used instead. When the same edition of a

text is available in both hardcover and paperback versions, with two different ISBN codes, they are both given in the “Notes” field.

About documents: this kind of source, being produced by official public institutions, may not be credited to any specific physical person(s). Thus the “Author” field may contain the office or institution that produced the document, if no reference to actual authors is present. If it is a national institution, the name of the institution itself is given, followed by the abbreviated nation, e.g. House of Commons (UK). Otherwise, as in the case of international organisations, the name of the entity that produced the document is inserted in the “Author” field, while the general institution of which the entity is part is given in the “Name of the organisation” field (which is left blank in the case of national institutions), e.g. author: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – “Name of the organisation”: United Nations. For documents, the “Notes” field is also used to give the reference number (if it exists) and any web-link.

About web editions: some kinds of sources (especially magazines and papers) are available through the net, sometimes even exclusively, where no printed version exists. The “Notes” field is used to include any relevant information, pointing to web-editions of the source (and their date of last access).

Groups: these may be generic (e.g. “Chinese Triads”) or specific (e.g. “Christian Identity”), depending on how the original source refers to them. When adding facts in the databank, generic references are associated to specific ones, but not vice-versa (e.g. if the “Medellín cartel” is cited, then the “Colombian cartels” will also be linked). In the case of groups indicated by acronyms, then the common English acronym is used.

Crimes: this list includes crimes in the strictest sense, i.e. violations of UN resolutions or cease-fires are not included.

Glossary: since research using IT tools must respect very strict criteria, a glossary has been created, and is updated each time the need arises with words used in the database that may raise issues about their being univocal, i.e. acronyms or transliterated text.

5. Conclusion

The essential features of the *GlobalViolence* database are described. This is a work in progress, both in terms of its structure and of its contents. It is hoped that this will be the first step in creating a network of research centres working on similar

issues, to facilitate the exchange of knowledge among scholars. Any comments are welcome.

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