



# The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order

*Sean McFate*

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It was 2004, and Sean McFate had a mission in Burundi: to keep the president alive and prevent the country from spiraling into genocide, without anyone knowing that the United States was involved. The United States was, of course, involved, but only through McFate's employer, the military contractor DynCorp International. Throughout the world, similar scenarios are playing out daily. The United States can no longer go to war without contractors. Yet we don't know much about the industry's structure, its operations, or where it's heading. Typically led by ex-military men, contractor firms are by their very nature secretive. Even the U.S. government—the entity that actually pays them—knows relatively little.

In *The Modern Mercenary*, Sean McFate lays bare this opaque world, explaining the economic structure of the industry and showing in detail how firms operate on the ground. A former U.S. Army paratrooper and private military contractor, McFate provides an unparalleled perspective into the nuts and bolts of the industry, as well as a sobering prognosis for the future of war. While at present, the U.S. government and U.S. firms dominate the market, private military companies are emerging from other countries, and warlords and militias have restyled themselves as private security companies in places like Afghanistan and Somalia. To understand how the proliferation of private forces may influence international relations, McFate looks back to the European Middle Ages, when mercenaries were common and contract warfare the norm. He concludes that international relations in the twenty-first century may have more in common with the twelfth century than the twentieth. This "back to the future" situation, which he calls "neomedievalism," is not necessarily a negative condition, but it will produce a global system that contains rather than solves problems.

*The Modern Mercenary* is the first work that combines a broad-ranging theory of the phenomenon with an insider's understanding of what the world of the private military industry is actually like.

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