

## **Politicized Interventions: Private Security Companies and Armed Conflicts in Africa**

Olajide O. Akanji<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Ibadan, Department of Political Science, Ibadan, Nigeria

akanjijide@yahoo.com

In recent time, private security companies have become an essential component of international peacekeeping operations in different parts of the world. In Africa, a number of private security and military companies have been involved in humanitarian operations in some of the region's conflict spots. Sandline International and Executive Outcomes were two private security companies that were involved in humanitarian operations in Sierra Leone and Liberia during the civil wars in both countries. Brown and Root, Blackwater, DynCorp, PAE, TopCat Maritime and Hart Security, have also been involved in peace missions across Africa. The UN, AU and ECOWAS have employed the services of these and other private security companies in the process of peacekeeping and peace enforcement in Africa, albeit with series of allegations from different quarters. This raises the need to interrogate the rationale, legality or otherwise, nature, and the future of the use of private security and military companies in conflict management. This paper thus analyses the role of private security companies in conflict management and resolution in Africa; how their involvement shaped the nature of armed conflict, and how their interventions facilitated or undermined the management and resolution of conflicts in the continent. It also focuses on the nature of the services provided by some of the private security and military companies and how such services are qualified to be considered as humanitarian.

Drawing on the content analysis of extant literature, the paper argues that the interventions of the private security companies have contributed to the management, particularly the de-escalation of armed conflicts in some instances, while they have equally fuelled hostilities in some other instances. It argues that the activities of the Executive Outcome (EO), for instance, stabilised Freetown by curtailing the military incursion of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) into the city, and by destroying the headquarters of the rebel group. DynCorp equally contributed to the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA); it facilitated the signing of the CPA through the provision of transport and logistics support for some of the delegates to the peace accord, and also by being part of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission monitoring compliance of the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army with the CPA. The paper however contends that the issues of politicisation, partisanship and profiteering undermine the credibility of the humanitarian assistance operations of the private security and military companies involved in Africa's conflicts.