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CRY HAVOC:
The Rise and Collapse of America's Contractors in Iraq
A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
Murray State University
Murray, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Masters of Arts in History

By Samuel Logan Brown

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Abstract: This work aims at examining the development of Private Security Contracting, specifically Blackwater, and their role in destabilizing the United States' mission in Iraq. In that examination, it looks at existing literature on the subject and the efforts that people involved in the Bush Administration made regarding the War on Terror that allowed these companies and Blackwater to develop. Choices made by Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Bremer all added to the chaos and the shortage of manpower that would see these companies fill in the gaps in American planning. This work will also examine Erik Prince, the former owner of Blackwater, and his role in bringing Blackwater to such a major role in the occupation of Iraq. Lastly, it will examine how actions taken by Blackwater destabilized the American mission in Iraq and destroyed good will between the Iraqi people and the United States military.

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Chapter 1

Despite the recentness of the subject of private security contracting there has already been a massive surge of literature. While little of that existing literature is historical work, there is still a great amount of writing carried out both on the popular and scholarly level. While examining this literature two major categories develop. The first are entire books that focus on the private contractors and their actions in Iraq, and to a lesser extent Afghanistan. These tend to be developed by journalists or people directly involved with contracting itself. Thus, they tend to have heated opinions of the system and what it meant for American policy in the Middle East. These sources also tend to focus nearly all their attention onto Blackwater, as it represents the largest business empire to develop out of contracting. The second category contains books about the War on Terror. Within these accounts, which usually contain more scholarly focus than the former category, contracting appears as part of a greater story. That does limit the focus but at the same time it removes some of the personal connection that affects the purely focused accounts.

In setting about examining both categories of literature, looking at those accounts solely focused on contracting first seems the most logical step. These accounts are varied in their messages and what each intends the reader to take away from having read their work. Erik Prince, the founder of Blackwater, wrote one of these accounts of the company and its time in the War on Terror. Prince's account surfaced not

long after several of Blackwater's employees were facing charges for murders committed in Iraq. It stands to reason that, *Civilian Warriors: The Inside Story of Blackwater and the Unsung Heroes of the War on Terror*, had been written to improve public relations.

Prince's writing also clearly addresses that, as Prince tries to present the company as much of an underdog which struggled to get off the ground. In Prince's point of view, much of the company success happened despite overwhelming adversity. That theme becomes one of the constants throughout Prince's account of Blackwater's rise and fall.¹

This theme becomes rapidly apparent in how Prince discusses almost anything to do with Blackwater. In trying to defend private contracting itself Prince spends an entire chapter of the book discussing how such practices are quite traditional. Some of Prince's examples and comparison are less pleasant than Prince intended, such as declaring Christopher Columbus his favorite historical contractor and then comparing Blackwater to the expedition Columbus led.² Other comparisons that Prince makes include John Smith and other individuals who helped to settle North America for the European powers.³ Nevertheless, the point Prince attempts to make with such comparisons is that nations have always needed the use of private individuals and their companies to accomplish certain matters of state. In his opinion, Blackwater is fulfilling much the same role as many others had done throughout history. Prince made every attempt to defend Blackwater from start to finish and attempting to create better relations with the American public as well as policy makers.⁴

¹Erik Prince, *Civilian Warriors: The Inside Story of Blackwater and the Unsung Heroes of the War on Terror*, (New York: Penguin, 2013) 50-55.

² Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 59

³ Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 61.

⁴Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 59-62.

Proving Prince's own altruism remains a rather important theme throughout the work as Prince brings it up anytime there is discussion on expansion of the company. Prince explains how the contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan were carried out by Blackwater with the best intentions of patriotism and a desire to help in mind. These elements form the core of Prince's argument, which is that Blackwater had every right to be serving alongside American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and was not the hazard to Iraqi relations that it had been made out to be.⁵ Despite having such a point to prove Prince does use more than just his own experiences as sources and those of Blackwater employees. Prince's analysis also includes sources that disagree with the point of view presented in *Civilian Warriors*.⁶

Another of the accounts that focuses solely on just the role of private contractors and specifically Blackwater in the war on terror is *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*. The author of this book, Jeremy Scahill, is a journalist, who also published several articles on the topic as well as *Blackwater*. The book is written to be an extremely revealing work on the actions of Blackwater as a company and how Erik Prince managed to place Blackwater into such a powerful position within American policy. It is far more negative than Prince's own account. Places where Prince shows readers triumphs, generosity, and national pride, Scahill shows bribery, political jockeying, and a network of favors. From the start the tone is completely different than what Prince laid out, opening with Prince facing a Congressional Committee for the

⁵ Prince *Civilian Warriors*, 357-359.

⁶Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 356-365.

actions of Blackwater.⁷ While Scahill crafts a negative narrative for Blackwater in his book the work is well researched. The notes are filled with government sources referencing these events as well as other media sources for parts that are more related to domestic issues. The weighty bibliography makes it clear that these claims are not leveled without evidence. While Scahill does express suspicion for the stories coming from contractors themselves they are still mentioned and cited in the bibliography, giving this account more balance than that of Prince's.⁸

Scahill's work highlights the major divide that occurs on the discussion of Private contractors. Whereas Prince adamantly defends contracting and Blackwater Scahill condemns both. As such Scahill quickly points out that while Prince claims to have struggled to get Blackwater up and running, Prince in fact had access to a multimillion dollar fortune before even attempting to start building Blackwater. As the son of a wealthy business owner Prince could easily finance the initial startup of the company after leaving service as a Navy SEAL. That success against the odds is not found in this work as it is even pointed out that Prince abandoned people who helped him start the company.⁹ Where Prince points struggle, Scahill points out attempts by Prince to make sure that power was consolidated at a single point, generally himself.¹⁰

Scahill also exposes Prince's numerous ties to American political figures, such as Prince's continuous donations to the Republican party. Scahill claims the Republican party to be a source of the support that Prince would have when Blackwater was

⁷Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, (New York: Nation Books, 2007) 1-5.

⁸Scahill, *Blackwater*, 469-475.

⁹ Scahill, *Blackwater*, 49-50.

¹⁰Scahill, *Blackwater*, 49-55.

expanding, even claiming it as a possible explanation of why Blackwater could claim so many contracts from the United States government in the Middle East and at home.¹¹

Blackwater's connections to occupation officials is also something that Scahill points out that is missing from Prince's account. Scahill cites several speeches given by Prince in critiquing Prince's account of Blackwater's history.¹² Scahill contends those connections are paramount to how the company managed to become the giant that it did.¹³

In Scahill's account there are none of the flattering success stories that exist in Prince's, their two accounts standing opposed on the same event. Anything that Prince points out as a victory, such as a defense of a government compound in Najaf Iraq. That defense saw several Blackwater Contractors and American personnel hold out against a mob attempting to overrun a Coalition Provisional Authority compound. Prince claims that defense as a victory for Blackwater, pointing out that his men were not only vital to the defense but invaluable in leading the effort.¹⁴ However, Scahill points out the aftermath of the event as an issue. Scahill reveals to readers how the deaths of several priests at the Najaf defense started a wide spread anti-occupation movement across Iraq.¹⁵ Clearly, as far as Scahill's account goes there is no clean victory for the men of Blackwater. The intent to prove that the company was a dubious choice for American policy makers is quite clear and in many ways well executed. Scahill can show readers

¹¹ Scahill, *Blackwater*, 25.

¹² Scahill, *Blackwater*, 26.

¹³ Scahill, *Blackwater*, 25-26.

¹⁴ Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 115-117.

¹⁵ Scahill, *Blackwater*, 60-61.

the damage done by Blackwater contractors in Iraq, showing how acts of violence could create a ripple of tensions across the entire nation.¹⁶

Compounding Scahill's account is the argument that American occupation forces did a great deal to try to hinder Iraqi attempts to seek justice. Scahill cites several instances of Iraqis either being outright ignored or having their stories blocked from making it to Western journalists who were in Iraq.¹⁷ Often contractors were trusted over locals and in many reports of these attacks only the contractors' side of the story was confirmed for the official incident reports. Importantly, that part of the debate is non-existent from Prince's account as it often overlooks Iraqi locals and how Prince's company interacted with them, beyond the fact there were threats among the Iraqi people. Prince largely reduces mentions of Iraqis in *Civilian Warriors* to almost that of scenery that occasionally becomes hostile.¹⁸ That missing account does little to help Prince's telling, as Iraqis seem to play at best a secondary role in that narrative.¹⁹

Scahill and Prince represent the farthest extremes of the available scholarship on Blackwater. Another of the authors to produce work on Blackwater was Suzanne Simons, a journalist with CNN who wrote the book *Master of War: Blackwater USA's Erik Prince and the Business of War*. The text serves to report on Blackwater's actions in the Middle East and at home. Simons includes a chapter on New Orleans that is further in depth than Prince or Scahill, and the book also serves as a short biography of Prince. A result of that is that Simons has Erik Prince himself as one of her primary sources. That does give Simons information on the early stages of the company and Prince's life before

¹⁶Scahill, *Blackwater*, 60-65.

¹⁷ Scahill, *Blackwater*, 34.

¹⁸ Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 156.

¹⁹Scahill, *Blackwater*, 34-40.

Blackwater. Simons does follow Prince's narrative closely, especially with the involvement in New Orleans.²⁰ Much like Prince she points out the good intentions involved in the company moving into the city after, in fact Simons often quotes her interviews with Prince directly.²¹ Those direct quotes are something that occur often in Simons' account of events, as her interviews with Prince seem to shape her narrative. Her entire discussion of the Blackwater efforts in New Orleans takes a shape much like that of Prince's account of events. The overlap in their story telling becomes apparent not only in the New Orleans chapter but also several other places throughout her work.²²

Because of that small separation, Simons' narrative changes in several ways. It starts to come off that Simons' writing tries to separate the man from the business, something that authors like Scahill do not do. In looking at the attacks reported by Prince's men Simons points out Prince puts full faith into his employees and did truly believe their telling of events. Simons tries to leave it up to the reader if that faith was misplaced or not. Simons also does the same in leaving readers to decide what happened in some of these events. Simons attempts to give the reader both Prince's telling and what was reported by the media at large without saying directly which may or may not be more correct. She does, however, point out the importance of Iraqis in making these stories main stream American news.²³

The last author and work to be discussed in those focusing solely on private contracting is Steve Fainaru's work *Big Boy Rules: America's Mercenaries Fighting in*

²⁰Suzanne Simons, *Master of War: Blackwater USA's Erick Prince and the Business of War*, (New York: Harper, 2009) 125-127.

²¹ Simons, *Master of War*, 31.

²²Simons, *Master of War*, 16-19.

²³Simons, *Master of War*, 160-167.

Iraq. Fainaru's work is important in that unlike Scahill and Prince he is not trying to show the reader a political narrative with private contractors. Instead, he is trying to show readers who the people involved with contracting were, giving Fainaru's work a much smaller focus. Fainaru tries to show readers just who these private contractors are, not letting them just vanish into the background of the occupation of Iraq as faceless actors. Instead he spends a great deal of time trying to communicate to his reader who these people are and how they ended up in their line of work. The contractors he interacted with for the sake of the book have a good deal of their story told.²⁴

A result of that focus is Fainaru can piece together the communities that private contractors formed in Iraq, in turn allowing him to cover how the smaller companies developed a network of rules and networks with each other in Blackwater's shadow. A kind of culture formed among these smaller companies that were overshadowed by the giant that Blackwater became. This insight gives readers some idea how these men operated on the ground and made unique circles away from the United States military. That focus gives readers a better grasp on the people who were involved in this system, the contractors themselves, than many other works on the subject do.²⁵ Another important aspect of his work is that he includes a great amount of research into the Iraqi telling of events. This effort creates a balance in that his personal interviews with contractors are directly contrasted with sources from Iraqis themselves.²⁶

While Fainaru makes use of many interviews to put his text and narrative into order, there is also research. Fainaru uses those sources to cite many of the facts he is

²⁴Steve Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules: America's Mercenaries Fighting In Iraq*, (Philadelphia: De Capo Press, 2008) 78-85.

²⁵Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 118-121.

²⁶Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 177-180.

covering and show readers he is not simply going off the top of his head. While these sources largely tend to be news sources, they are sufficiently varied. The use of sources beyond his interviewing skills and time spent abroad for the book makes this a well put together work. Certainly, when it comes to the ground level events of private contracting and understanding the people operating with those companies it is hard to top Fainaru. By focusing less on the politics and policy elements of the issue, Fainaru opens new ways to look at the events that went on in Iraq.²⁷

That limited focus makes Fainaru the only one of these authors to not discuss what role these people played domestically. While he will discuss what a given contractor did for a living prior to their employment in Iraq, he says virtually nothing about what this meant at home. Of these authors, he is the only one who does not discuss New Orleans or the other ways these companies found employment or influence in the United States at home. Admittedly, that was not what he chose to focus on but given the amount of detail he focused into other parts of the book it seems like a loss that he could not bring that level of detail to bear on those issues as well. It is hard to call that a weakness but it is something that feels like is missing from this account when faced with the clear amount of detail in the rest of the work.²⁸

Of the works that focus on the War on Terror and Iraq War the United States military's own account of the occupation becomes one of the most important. *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, as it is titled, is a book recounting the occupation. That includes the struggle of the American military and policy makers on the ground to deal with the transition from invasion to occupation. It is during that period that most of

²⁷Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 222-231.

²⁸Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 160-164.

the decisions that would later lead to the massive growth of the private contracting industry. *On Point* endeavors to give some insight to when and how these various decisions were made by occupation officials that would greatly increase the footing of these companies. Likely one of the most striking is the handing of almost all Iraqi civil officials; almost all of them were not trusted due to their ties to the Ba'ath party and Saddam Hussein's regime.²⁹

The book also can help readers to understand what the American military at large was doing during these events as well, allowing them to see the parallels between the response of the conventional military and that of the contractor companies. One of the most major of these is the uprising of the so-called Mahdi Army, which both Blackwater and the United States army had to contend with. *On Point* offers the political meaning of these events for Iraq itself, giving readers an idea of what the occupation officials who were mobilizing these private contractors were having to contend with. This book is a good source when considering the subject as it brings detail to these situations and even gives readers some idea of the fallout around a given event and what that meant for the occupation in the short term.³⁰

As far as the early stages of the campaign the book lends a solid idea of what the onset of the occupation looked like and gives a great amount of detail. While private contractors are rarely mentioned directly it is still useful to see those overlapping events. The book is also a vital tool for understanding the chaos of the occupation of Iraq. The numerous groups and political factions that emerged all wanted to have their say in the

²⁹Dr. Donald P. Wright and Colonel Timothy R. Reese. *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press. 2008) 92-93.

³⁰Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 34-36.

nation now that Saddam was out of power are well discussed and detailed. The book is also a good demonstration of how those divisions would be a major source of instability for Iraq especially as Allied forces scrambled to put together an occupational government.³¹ Additional understanding of the campaign into Iraq is a definite aid when looking at private contracting, making *On Point* highly useful. The attempts by the authors to show the struggle of trying to set operations in motion in Iraq gives readers an idea of the holes that could have developed in planning. Such flaws in planning are pointed out by the authors to prevent such mistakes in the future. With this being an official account of the war, improvement is supposed to be the end goal. For the study of private contracting and Blackwater those holes are places where manpower became thin and had to be covered by these private security contractors at least initially.³²

Given that the book is an official report it is no surprise that it is well researched. The sources make use of many official documents that deal with the setup of the occupation in Iraq. Compounding this are several media sources that also weigh in on the effect these events and decisions had at home. It also uses military sources and other studies into specific events of the occupation as well, making it clear why this book can have such good coverage of the many complicated events that were going on around this time in Iraq. The research clearly plays to this book's advantage in understanding the turbulent period it covers. While contractors are mainly only a side mention, the book contains a wealth of information to use for any reader examining the field.³³

³¹Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 23-26.

³²Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 20-23.

³³Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 656-658.

The next book to discuss also follows the chaos of the United States' involvement in Iraq. James Bamford's *A Pretext For War: 9/11, Iraq, and The Abuse of America's Intelligence Agencies* looks at some of the issues that occurred within American intelligence that led to the 9/11 attacks and as well as misinformation on Iraq's use of weapons of mass destruction. While it strays away from the focus of private contracting it is of course imperative to have a strong understanding of the invasion of Iraq for this subject. The development of the war and the invasion that would turn into the occupation all lay the foundation for that system to develop. Bamford's examination into the reasons behind the war and the roles America's intelligence agencies played in the buildup to the war is an important look at what would come next. The chaos that he outlines even in the earliest chapters of his work becomes a theme throughout it.³⁴

Bamford points out the need for reform among American intelligence agencies as a constant issue, one that would be echoed in the lack of manpower when the occupation of Iraq began. The lack of personnel in American intelligence who even spoke Middle Eastern languages was lacking. The ability of those agencies to even respond to those issues was also hampered as they found themselves hamstrung by their own policies. While not directly related, such struggles can make it clear to a reader why privatization would become such a direct answer to many questions for the United States when looking to the War on Terror. It is also a clear hint to the troubles that the United States would later face when trying to set up the occupation of Iraq, as these problems seemed to translate there as well.³⁵

³⁴James Bamford, *A Pretext For War: 9/11, Iraq, and The Abuse of America's Intelligence Agencies*, (New York: Double Day, 2004) 67-71.

³⁵Bamford, *A Pretext for War*, 113-116.

Bamford also spends a great deal of time discussing the lack of American attention to where exactly anti-American sentiment was coming from in the Middle East. He focused greatly on relations with Israel as a major source of discontent. The arming of Israel against its neighbors as a Cold War and post-Cold War policy caused a great deal of animosity in the Middle East toward the United States. Failures to understand local sentiment quickly became one of the major themes throughout the American operation in Iraq as well. Bamford does an excellent job in demonstrating how failures to comprehend the issues earlier would only translate to more issues down the line. He gives readers the idea that this lack of understanding would remain a problem as it had since the Cold War. That struggle to grasp these local issues are clearly echoed in *On Point*, as seen with the struggle to balance Iraq's many political, religious, and ethnic groups.³⁶

Bamford's work shows thorough research into all the topics that it covers. He combines several government documents and media sources into his work that makes for a good diversity of sources. His work is a well-balanced account despite the aggressive argument of its point, which is skillful given that Bamford is tying an administration so closely to an event. Clearly the evidence was there, as Bamford has the sources to back up what he says in his notes. The solid research and the important themes set forth in this book in many ways make it a good opening chapter to reading on Iraq. As such it fits as an early chapter to this subject and shows readers what problems already existed before going into Iraq.³⁷

Another of these books that acts as a good opening to understanding the prelude to the occupation of Iraq and the issue of contracting is Bob Woodward's *Bush at War*.

³⁶Bamford, *A Pretext for War*, 270-274.

³⁷Bamford, *A Pretext for War*, 380-385.

Like Bamford, Woodward looks at the Bush administration's actions in heading into the War on Terror. Woodward takes an entirely different path when looking at the same things, giving a moderately different impression on the players involved at the White House. This could be lent to the fact that Woodward had entirely different levels of access to the administration, in that he interviewed the president and several cabinet members. These interviews may well have given him an entirely different viewpoint into the reasoning and plans for going into the war. As such, Woodward's account provides an interesting balance point to Bamford's. In contrast, it seems that Woodward's goal is less to see how the administration convinced the public to buy into the war, and more of how the decision-making process worked at the top.³⁸

Much like Bamford, Woodward has a great deal to say about the American intelligence community, as that is a major part of the story of the United States entering the War on Terror. Woodward is certainly not as negative as Bamford and does not point out the places that these organizations needed reform. Instead Woodward focuses more on the people involved in these goings-on. Woodward spends time discussing the policies of Bill Clinton against those of Bush when each of them was president, how intelligence operated under the two presidents, and how that altered goals and decisions that needed to be made. The focus on the rapidly changing situation after 9/11 is also a major focus and Woodward skillfully grounds his readers by showing how major players dealt with that change.³⁹

Woodward's focus on the President and the people around him is also helpful. It gives readers an idea of the actors involved in the various choices made from the top

³⁸Bob Woodward, *Bush At War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), xi-xiii.

³⁹Woodward, *Bush At War*, 5-9.

down on dealing with the war and decision to move forward. After all, nearly all of these people would remain the same heading into the later periods of the War on Terror. As such they remain prominent throughout the Bush administration. The author points to the fact that President Bush was aware of his own shortcomings on the matters of warfare and how to proceed. That meant he would need to rely on the various voices around him and as such those advisors were put into powerful positions of influence. Those positions turned these people into power players in the administration and important decision makers, as Woodward points out. Some of these players, like Vice President Dick Cheney, were also important in the privatization efforts that would become a major factor in the increasing employment of contractors.⁴⁰

Woodward covers how Cheney and others became important to the occupations of both Iraq and Afghanistan. They dealt almost directly with the affairs on the ground in both cases and making major decisions on how to proceed in both cases. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld became one of the primary decision makers for Afghanistan, deciding on how to rebuild the military there and restructure the new government as the question of how to phase out the United States military from shouldering the burden of governing arose. This instills in readers an idea of how some of these officials could become so powerful in their given realms of influence. Once again the comparison could be there to the occupation officials in Iraq itself.⁴¹

Another author like Bamford that deals with American intelligence on the pre-Invasion planning for Iraq is Scott Ritter's *Iraq Confidential: The Untold Story of the Intelligence Conspiracy to Undermine the UN and Overthrow Saddam Hussein*. Ritter's

⁴⁰Woodward, *Bush at War*, 36-38.

⁴¹Woodward, *Bush at War*, 321-323.

focus is less how American intelligence was exploited and more of how the American government acted rashly and snubbed the advice and findings of the United Nations. Ritter points out such oversights as the fact that Iraq admitted the nation had destroyed nearly all its most dangerous weapons after Desert Storm. Ritter claims those weapons being destroyed and several other key pieces of information were overlooked or ignored, the United States and even Britain had already planned on the war. Much like Bamford there is the overlying theme to all of this that the war was unnecessarily preemptive and that Iraq could have been strong-armed politically.⁴²

As a result of his focus, Ritter gives his readers a solid look at the United Nations inspection team that was sent in to deal with Iraq. That team's job after the 9/11 attacks was to report on the possible weapons of mass destruction that Iraq may or may not hold. The point of view stands apart; many other authors like Bamford write off the inspection team to some degree or they are reduced to faceless individuals.⁴³ Ritter does not though, as he took part in the team and that makes him a vital part of this narrative as a primary source. Many of the things he mentions he directly experienced or had a hand in make the account weighty and show that the inspection team could have been taken more seriously. So, Ritter's account is important as he tells part of the story that most other people simply make a footnote. Aside from that it gives a new element to points like Bamford's that American intelligence played a major role in this story, though Ritter would claim they are the trickster and not the victim.⁴⁴

⁴²Scott Ritter, *Iraq Confidential: The Untold Story of the Intelligence Conspiracy to Undermine the UN and Overthrow Saddam Hussein*, (New York: Nation Books, 2005), 39-44.

⁴³ Bamford, *A Pretext for War*, 68.

⁴⁴Ritter, *Iraq Confidential*, 10-14.

Also, important to note is that despite being directly involved with these affairs Ritter still has a rather extensive note section. His notes are a combination of sources referenced and some expanded detail on some points outside of the narrative. Many of his sources are some of those inspection team documents. There is the occasional outside source but it seems like Ritter may have mostly relied on many of the things he was already working on. There is still something to be said of the fact that a lot of this information is in writing other places but he also has a lot of interviews cited as well. While not the most varied set of sources in the world there is certainly something to be said for what research was done. Ritter made efforts to confirm much of what he said in the book and having friends in American and British intelligence seems to have been a major aid in that. All in all, Ritter's account is an important one that gives insight to a chapter of the events leading into the war with Iraq that many people tend to overlook. Furthermore, it continues to define American intelligence as extremely important to the events both before the war and after it started, making them a continuous thematic element when looking at the war in Iraq for any subject.⁴⁵

One of the last works to examine is Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro's *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis Over Iraq*, a work that examines the American-European relationship and how it was affected by the war in Iraq. Among the major points of the book is that the choice to pursue a war with Saddam Hussein led to one of the biggest divisions that have occurred between the United States and its European allies. The opening choice to pursue the war was met with hostility by some European nations, and large sections of European populations also opposed it. Many nations chose

⁴⁵Ritter, *Iraq Confidential*, 290-301.

to throw in their support for the actions of the United States despite the demands of their populations. Such strong divisions show how divisive the issue was not just on the national scale in the states but also internationally. It was an issue that absolutely deadlocked the United Nations Security Council. The backlash was certainly there and that division would be problematic for the United States as it sought allies for the war. Though the authors quickly point out that such bumps in the relationship with Europe had happened before this was much more divisive than some of the previous events.⁴⁶

The authors of *Allies at War*, like Ritter, point out much of the planning for the invasion could have been much smoother. Certainly, the European powers felt that Iraq was a problem that needed to be addressed. The conflict stemmed from the decision to use brute force as the solution. While there were not many other viable solutions on the Iraq problem, many European nations felt that a better solution could have been found. Many of the European nations were surprised by what Ritter pointed out in his work; that to a degree the Iraqi government was willing to cooperate with the United Nations on the issue of their various weapons programs. While that cooperation was not to the fullest extent it could have been, it certainly gave opposing nations like France and Germany ammunition to use against going to war. This ensured that international opposition was consistent throughout the proceedings going into the war. Another point that *Allies at War* echoes Ritter is the fact that Bush, ignoring various United Nations mechanisms, eroded international support from the start.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis Over Iraq*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004) 1-5.

⁴⁷Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies At War*, 6-11.

The authors of *Allies at War* also spend a great deal of time discussing the implications of Iraq becoming part of the war on terror. Fearing another attack on American soil, the Bush administration declared that they could not only target terrorist organizations themselves but states that sheltered them as well. While such comments were originally directed at Afghanistan, that message soon evolved to include Iraq, which was a problem for many of the European powers. The Bush administration took the stance that Iraq could not merely be contained quickly led the European nations in dissent to see what was coming. There is the repeated theme once again of that drive for war by the Bush Administration that something needed to be done quickly and aggressively. That same message occurs in this work as well, that rushing off to the war could clearly be part of the problem. In the case of *Allies at War* that mistake is twofold. Like in Ritter's work, it is snubbing the United Nations but taking it a step farther with the twist that it was also a major upset to American European allies. While the authors do point out that the gaps created were not unbridgeable they were certainly unnecessary.⁴⁸

It appears one of the major strands that comes away from reading about the period leading into the Iraq War is that it was chaotic. Leadership was up in the air with several figures other than the president having a great deal of influence and the ability to interject into various issues. It caused a great deal of tension internationally that left the United States more on its own than it had previously. In examining the literature on private contracting these elements appear to play into that story, giving readers several elements that seem to have contributed to that system developing. As well, many of these works show readers just how divided the literature on private contracting is. With authors like

⁴⁸Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies at War*, 91-96.

Prince and Scahill setting extreme defenses and criticisms of contracting. The scholarship of contracting seems to lose itself in the debate over if it was an effective or even moral system. A result of that debate is that examinations on how and why private contracting became so important in the Iraq war are often lost. While parts of that discussion surface in some of these works, they are not given as much attention as the political debate. The origins of contracting's rise and then downsizing with the collapse of Blackwater are still ripe for study.

Chapter 2

In examining how Blackwater and other private contracting companies became so powerful in Iraq the logical starting point is to look at how these companies developed. There are several major opinions on how it happened and they vary from each account. Scahill points toward Vice President Dick Cheney's tenure as Secretary of Defense as being one of the primary points of privatization for the American military. Scahill points out that these developments and the gaps that would open in privatization can all be tied back to Cheney and his involvement in Halliburton. Not only that, Scahill holds that there are several instances in the early nineties where American companies became involved with military affairs; several American companies involved themselves in the wars that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia. One of the companies was supported by the Clinton administration to train the Croatian army against the Serbian forces and possibly could have tipped the balance in that conflict. Cheney's ties to some of these companies, like Halliburton, are seen as one of the connections that saw contracting expand.⁴⁹

Dick Cheney and his ties to Halliburton and several other big companies were players in the trends and developments that would produce Blackwater. Cheney held many positions of power throughout the American government and many authors have pointed out how he used that influence. Cheney's close ties to George Bush gave

⁴⁹Scahill, *Blackwater*, 51-52.

Cheney a great deal of power as Vice President, as authors like Woodward point out.⁵⁰ Bush's attitude toward parts of the decision-making process made him rely on people like Cheney for support, as they were political veterans. That choice to allow the veterans around Bush to become more important in the decision-making process than was typical made Cheney a powerful man. That extra influence would make Cheney a powerful actor in the War on Terror and that was a position that he would use to his own advantage in some positions.⁵¹

In fact, that influence may be one of the least contested things about Cheney's part in the War on Terror and the story of contracting. His tenure as Vice President is debated as one of the most influential in American history. Some writers even credit Cheney's rise to power has a calculated goal for Cheney while he occupied the office. The increase in the power of the executive branch would not only make the seat of the president more powerful but his own as well. As such there is some debate as to how deliberate that concentration of power was. The War on Terror itself made for an excellent chance to increase the power of that office. Due to the war and several ongoing trends that saw the powers of the Vice President expanded, Cheney could push himself to the forefront of the Bush Administration. That increase in power took effort and is one of the key moments to the Cheney Vice Presidency. Cheney's connections to private business interests in turn make for an extremely important subject to examine.⁵²

Some of the use Cheney got out of his position was the increased leverage and profits that were available to the fifteen companies that he was involved with. Halliburton

⁵⁰ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 321.

⁵¹ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 321-323.

⁵² Joel K. Goldstein, "The Contemporary Presidency: Cheney, Vice Presidential Power, and the War on Terror," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 1, Ethics and the Presidency (2010), 102-104.

was included on that list of companies and it is thought that many of them benefitted from their contact with him. It is hard to track how much these companies benefitted from Cheney's influence, as they did not face impressive increases in the price of their stocks. Though it is important to note that many of the connections he had with those companies extended further back than his tenure as vice president, with him sitting on boards at some of these companies between or before his various political terms. Given those many positions, there may have been some influences that developed during his tenure in other offices. Still that information makes it hard to track if Cheney went out of his way to help many of these companies while he was part of the Bush administration.⁵³

Though it is hard to track the stock increase during Cheney's time as Vice President there is something to be said for the profits. Several newspapers were quick to point out that Halliburton had indeed turned profits from the events of the War on Terror. In its time in Iraq Halliburton became the seventh largest contracting company and did turn a profit, though the public relations nightmare that came from being involved did harm the company to some degree. This reaffirms that their connection to the Vice President and the war may not have played out as well as some critics point out. Still the company managed to turn a profit while Cheney was in power and got more than one contract that it was the sole bidder on. With no other company being considered, this alone could give the appearance for preferred treatment. It also demonstrates that the media was going to become an opponent of the war and private contracting itself, with the American media and left attacking first Haliburton and later Blackwater.⁵⁴

⁵³Joshua E. Keating, "How Much Is It Worth to Know Dick?" *Foreign Policy*, No. 200 (2013), p. 27

⁵⁴David E. Rosenbaum, "A Closer Look at Cheney and Halliburton," *New York Times*, September 28, 2004.

At the same time, some authors like Scahill contend that Cheney's political career is one of the turning points in military privatization that would allow contracting companies to flourish. Scahill makes the claim that Cheney could use his influence as Secretary of Defense under the first President Bush to start trends that Cheney would only continue once in the position of Vice President. That tenure as the Secretary of Defense allowed Cheney to increase the profits of Halliburton by allowing the company to take over many military logistical functions. Scahill compounds that claim by discussing that the falling military budget had allowed for such measures to come to pass. With the military cutting its spending back private companies could move in and replace the roles that it was giving up. As well the company was tasked with creating a report on how to further expand that privatization. Clearly, while profits may have not been obvious from the stocks when Cheney was Vice President there may be other ways that the companies pushed to expand privatization in the military.⁵⁵

The role of Halliburton in the Balkans from 1995 until 2000 certainly becomes one of the major points to look at. The company expanded when it took on no bid contracts when American forces moved into the Balkans during the NATO and UN operations there. Halliburton and its associated companies carried out most of the logistical work for the United States forces there. That period of budget cuts encouraged those making decisions in the military to seek out these private answers to their supply problems abroad. This led many to try and defend the practices as successful and cost effective. Which they may well have been at the time, as United States forces needed to move into the Balkans rapidly and effectively to carry out the missions for both the UN

⁵⁵Scahill, *Blackwater*, 50-51.

and NATO. The funding for the operations in the Balkans was already small and required cost effective answers. That low funding meant that a cheap bid from Halliburton was the readiest answer. Not to mention that the employment of the company there was largely a success. It proved to be a cheaper than carrying these operations out internally. That would provide plenty of incentive to employ Halliburton again if the need for that logistical support arose.⁵⁶

There were many in the military that were extremely impressed by the outcome of Halliburton's role in the Balkans, pointing out the amount saved by the skillfully managed contract, 33.8 million American Dollars. There are also accounts of how contractors started to fill in for troops when numbers in the Balkans were whittled down. There would be echoes of that exact situation in Iraq after the invasion was over. With contractors moving in to close bases and help with efforts on consolidating those bases and even taking over some non-combat facilities as they were decreased in size. While at this point that does not include security needs there is something to be said that the Balkans seem to have been used as a planning model for how the American government would later use contractors in Iraq. Oversight did become a key part of these plans, logistical planners thinking the military should make use of these private businesses but keep an eye on them to make sure the contract is carried out effectively and with acceptable means.⁵⁷ That line of reasoning would be called on again in Iraq after Blackwater and other contractors proved to unruly without proper oversight.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Theresa Davis, "Controlling Contract Costs in the Balkans," *Army Logistician*, November 2005.

⁵⁷ Davis, "Controlling Contract Costs in the Balkans."

⁵⁸Davis, "Controlling Contract Costs in the Balkans."

It is also important to mention that the tapering down of the UN and therefore the United States' presence in the Balkans as the breakup of Yugoslavia began to cool down was another of those successes. Contractors for extended periods of time could be expensive but by quickly downsizing operations in the area the contracts could be reduced before costs grew too high. A success record like that would certainly have been considered when contractors were being suggested again later. It was a cost effective and extremely useful resource in the Balkans conflicts and did in fact fulfill all the tasks that were needed. That could well have served an important role for many decision makers looking back at these successes when debating on what to do about the various manpower issues that developed in Iraq. Combining that success of Halliburton and its related companies here with the continued decrease in troop numbers across the board seems to have been a contributing factor. As well the more these contracting companies could grow the more they took over traditional military roles as well. Halliburton's contracts in the Balkans conflict were large but they would only grow in future conflicts.⁵⁹

Certainly, that confirmed by other sources, as Halliburton became the largest provider of food in Iraq. Their previous efforts in supply were rather minor compared to the efforts they would undertake in Iraq. The company clearly grew rapidly at the same time the contracting system that would affect the occupation began to reach its highest points. Much like in the Balkans back in 1995 many of these contracts were not open to competition and Halliburton claimed them rapidly. Not only did the company take over food transport and supply for the United States military they also took over the repair and rebuilding of Iraq's oil industry. The company was the only one in the region with the

⁵⁹Davis, "Controlling Contract Costs in the Balkans."

resources and the ability to do so is the reason given for Halliburton getting the contract with no contest. There could be some argument made that the only reason the company was already in such a position was due to their already heavy success with the United States military. Given how important they became in the early nineties that seems a likely situation for how that was possible just a few years later.⁶⁰

Those successes in the Balkans made American planners feel like they had a system that would work for the next occupation. An occupation supplemented by contracting logistics could do well in these circumstances. Due to the relative short term of the Balkans operations it also seemed like this was a cost-effective option. The short-term contracts were the most cost effective means of moving supplies. As planners had time to consider the successes and how well the plans with Halliburton had been implemented they clearly saw contracting as a valuable and cost saving resource. They had no reason to think that there in another occupation contracting could become a problem. With those successes in mind and seeing that contractors could easily take over traditional military tasks, American planners became convinced that contractors could fill in for any role they might need them in. Though they would be surprised later to see that Iraq was an entirely different situation to the operations in the Balkans.⁶¹

As the companies grew and became more profitable they turned to campaign contributions to gain more influence. As such the larger some of these early contracting companies became the more influential they could become. The study seems to have proved that the more a company donates the more contracts it is likely to receive.

Companies like Halliburton that were hired on to fill in gaps that post-Cold War spending

⁶⁰Rosenbaum, "A Closer Look at Cheney and Halliburton."

⁶¹ Davis, "Controlling Contract Costs in the Balkans."

reductions had caused found ways to become profitable. Thus, they had many reasons to make sure those contracts kept coming. This would account for these campaign contributions and the expansion of those contracts.⁶²

So, it does seem that while these companies had no direct profit from their ties to men like Cheney, there was something to be said for what they could do on their own. The ability to move capital around and bribe some politicians in the position to help deal on contracts seems to have been an aid. It is no stretch to assume that these companies' donations could quickly become something of a rapidly escalating competition, each of them trying to outdo each other thereby creating a system that profits these contracting companies and expands their influence. Certainly, such a system would be influential later down the line, as security contractors became powerhouses. Blackwater's own Erik Prince became a well-known donor to many figures in the Republican Party and Bush administration. A system of donation for reward like this could have become a part of the story of how the system developed, just like those budget cuts and falling manpower issues had. This might have allowed these already growing companies to exert more influence and even increase the number of military affairs they were taking over. Such an accelerating system could become a factor of how contracting companies could become such a part of military planning so quickly. There are several elements at work here that all tie into how and why this system developed.⁶³

It is also important to look at the narrative Scahill lays out as it includes in it neo conservatives who would become important to the Bush administration. Not only does

⁶²Christopher Witko, "Campaign Contributions, Access, and Government Contracting," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (October 2011), 761-765.

⁶³Witko, "Campaign Contributions, Access, and Government Contracting," 766-769.

Scahill point toward Cheney but also Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and an organization called Project for a New American Century. Among that group's many ideas was the thought that the American military machine needed an overhaul and that no such event could occur without a disaster. The 9/11 attacks served that purpose and elevated some of the members of that group, which of course included Cheney and Rumsfeld. Both were also supporters of military privatization, according to Scahill. Regardless of the actual players involved behind the scenes, by the time of the invasion of Iraq there were nearly enough private contractors on the ground that they held a one-to-one ratio to American soldiers in Iraq. That sudden shift and development also saw those contractors lumped into the Department of Defense's total tally of its manpower. These groups became part of the American mission into Iraq and Scahill makes it clear that in his mind they were important in making contractors such a part of the war.⁶⁴

Scahill also contends that these choices were made by some of these people like Rumsfeld to try to weaken the Pentagon, the end goal being the lining of their own pockets through the decisions to privatize many Department of Defense functions. If this was a "War on the Pentagon" as Scahill claims, it would be difficult to prove but the end results are certainly there. By the time of Iraq's occupation setting in contractors already had a presence in the country under the employment of the Department of Defense. That huge influx of these contracting companies led to Blackwater's rise to power. In that rise it even outshined Haliburton, which had been one of the better established contracting companies. Certainly, according to Scahill's account, there is something to be said about the aftermath of these ideas to rebuild the American military. Something about them

⁶⁴Scahill, *Blackwater*, 52-55.

clearly had an influence, increasing the ability of these companies to become part of the American War on Terror.⁶⁵

In trying to make those connections to these key players like Rumsfeld it is important to look at the things they have said about the issue. One of the works that Rumsfeld wrote about the rebuilding of the American military is cited by Scahill and gives insight to the former Secretary of Defense's outlook on how American defense should face reconstruction. In Rumsfeld's own account of events he started to view the need for military change differently after a visit to Afghanistan. There, Rumsfeld saw the combination of American Special Forces and local allies that helped to bring down the Taliban regime there. Rumsfeld praises the offensive there and how the combination of modern American tactics and munitions managed to develop into an efficiently functioning attack strategy. Though he does extoll the importance of those modern and guided munitions that made the employment of the Afghani forces on the ground a viable tactic, at the same time he stressed the importance of innovation and changing old ideas to fit the new and evolving battlefield. One of Rumsfeld's main thrusts here is that the military must plan for ever changing threats; the Cold War was over and the new world would not provide the same consistent threats.⁶⁶

At first look this would not seem to present the push for more privatization in military efforts. Indeed, at first it seems like a more generalized push for the continued evolution of American military tactics and strategy. Rumsfeld also focuses in on that change from Cold War policy, pointing out that the Cold War tended to have similar issues and solutions, the constant back and forth of the arms race being one of the

⁶⁵Scahill, *Blackwater*, 53-56.

⁶⁶Donald H. Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 3 (2002), 20-22.

examples that he brings up to make that point.⁶⁷ The shift from those Cold War habits were what left the defense stratagem of the United States vulnerable to the constant changing world that had now developed in the aftermath. With the Soviet Union gone, so too was the idea of the United States having a foe it could easily predict and maneuver around. Rumsfeld holds that this is what had weakened the American military.⁶⁸ These first few points give the article the feeling of just a call for reform among the military, certainly not as aggressive as was implied by Scahill. That tone shifts rapidly as Rumsfeld moves further into discussing why Cold War policy should be transitioned out.⁶⁹

Not long after setting into those issues Rumsfeld starts discussing the ideas that the United States' standing forces for the Cold War could be too much. There could be cuts to manpower in favor of focusing resources into deterrents that would focus on more on ways to prevent threats. He declares that a reduction in forces would not reduce deterrence felt by the targets of American forces and they would still be able to occupy and deal with a single threat effectively. That is something, which sounds familiar, a call for the reduction in the standing forces of the United States. Reducing the active manpower would be one of the primary issues that would later occur in the occupation of Iraq. The standing force that was supposed to be enough to occupy a hostile capital and pave the way for the regime change appeared to have a struggle in doing so after these cuts. As well, Rumsfeld calls for moving away from plans that were put in place to defeat specific enemies and instead general plans that minimized threats to the United States and

⁶⁷ Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 22.

⁶⁸ Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 23.

⁶⁹Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 22-24.

closed possible weak points. While some parts of this logic seem sound, such as knowing that few enemies of the United States would plan for conventional war with it, other parts such as the elimination of plans for specific enemies seems less sound.⁷⁰

Importantly, while Rumsfeld calls for the elimination of some American manpower he does call for increased military spending. Much of that spending would be spent not on troops but instead on new developments, new technologies that could reduce the amount of men needed on the ground. The lessons learned from Afghanistan proving to some, possibly Rumsfeld, that some of these regime changes could be done with relatively few men with solid technical support. Directly referenced in this area of his article is that idea that the American government needs to increase in programs to deny protection to enemies of the United States. Scahill holds that thinking to be thinly veiled plans to strike at Iraq. Combined with earlier mentions of weapons of mass destruction being a major threat to the security of the United States, there is certainly a case to be made for that argument. Rumsfeld is clearly pushing for new military developments and outlying a vague idea of what enemies of the United States will look like in the near future and much of it sounds like Iraq.⁷¹

While it is clear there is some push for the invasion of Afghanistan it seems hard to say there is anything here that could directly be pointed out as a call for private contractors. There is certainly something to be said for the fact there could clearly be holes in these plans that would cause more contractors to be hired than previously had been. The plans, which revolved around the need for a reduced number of troops and instead focusing on smaller, more well-supported troops, brings this to mind. Given that

⁷⁰Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 24-25.

⁷¹Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 23-26.

contractors started to fill gaps in manpower when occupying Iraq, it seems those reduced troop numbers may have been an issue. The calls for the elimination for plans that were designed exactly for a given hostile nation may have also been an issue. In an occupation knowledge of the enemy nation could be vital; without a plan tailored to occupying a given nation it could make such a military investment more problematic. Those problems became more apparent as Rumsfeld makes it clear that development of new weaponry could be more important in eliminating these threats than a change in a state's leadership. These elements appear to be traceable to an issue that would later appear in the occupation of Iraq.⁷²

The connection to Iraq is only furthered by the fact that Rumsfeld repeatedly calls for the use of preemptive action, claiming this won't just win wars but prevent them. Many other authors have pointed out the preemptive strike against Iraq was something that would come back to haunt the United States. While Rumsfeld does not directly reference any country in the Middle East other than Afghanistan, knowing the other regional current events at the time of his writing make it hard to dispute that he is discussing Iraq. Largely, in this writing Rumsfeld found a way to discuss the possibility of an invasion of Iraq behind the ideas of military reform. His calls for being ready for any threat and the framing of those threats, such states that support terrorism or have weapons of mass destruction provide several hints to that point. These later points, combined with things like his discussion of regime changes, outline some of the issues that would accelerate privatization in the military field.⁷³

⁷²Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 22-25, 27.

⁷³Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 23, 27.

Those issues with the occupation of Iraq are just some of these common threads. While it comes late in his writing Rumsfeld does make a subtle push that could be taken as a call for privatization. Largely, that comes in the form of how Rumsfeld discusses the way that new military reforms should be undertaken; new ways to approach the budget take on business like language, how to invest funds more effectively and similar terms.⁷⁴ The idea of handling military funds like a business is not all that unheard of but mixed into this is once again the call for reduction in personnel. While calling for an increased budget and looking at better ways to spend that money Rumsfeld also declares it is better to spend that money on things other than “shooters.” This is not a direct line to privatization but when an author is pointing out that the United States has more responsibilities in defense but doesn’t need as large of a standing force it sends a message. It certainly leaves the way open for private contracting to develop to reduce those American forces. Increasing the budget does mean they could be more easily hired. While privatization may not have been one of Rumsfeld’s direct goals, his attitude that the Department of Defense needed to behave more like “Venture Capitalists” may hint that he was not entirely opposed to it, perhaps even hinting at some of this rhetoric as veiled language toward using the private sector more.⁷⁵

This is not quite as dramatic as Scahill's claims but certainly there is much to be said that the attitude in his discussion on reforming the military leaves the path to greater privatization open. It is difficult to say if Rumsfeld’s thoughts in going into the war with Iraq he had the same mindset as men like Erik Prince, who would make the comparison between Blackwater and FedEx. Prince stated that the private sector is generally regarded

⁷⁴ Rumsfeld, “Transforming the Military” 28.

⁷⁵Rumsfeld, “Transforming the Military” 28-29.

as far more effective compared to its public-sector peers.⁷⁶ While some of the points that Rumsfeld made could have clearly made the events leading to the increase in contracting possible it seems unlikely that he had that intention openly. Certainly, while his statement that the Department of Defense could benefit from a private sector outlook makes it clear he is not uncomfortable with the idea of privatization, it doesn't seem that is his goal. At worst his writing implies he was open to the possibility and was promoting a Doctrine of Preemption but still felt that conventional American forces with better technical support could do what they needed to do. That, combined with the fact that Rumsfeld seems impressed with American ground troops in Afghanistan makes it seem unlikely he would desire to replace them, though he would not be opposed to supplementing them.⁷⁷

An important organization that Rumsfeld and other key players, like Dick Cheney, copied many of its ideals from was the Project for a New American Century. The Project for a New American Century had a lot to say about the reinvention of American forces as well. In a document, titled *Rebuilding America's Defenses* the organization set out to outline the ways it would do so. With the Project's many connections to important politicians it could gain influence with its ideas.⁷⁸ *Rebuilding America's Defenses* itself is a dense document that brings up many issues that it feels should be addressed as the twentieth century was ending and how the United States might address those issues as it was faced with the prospect of being nearly unchallenged on the world stage at the end of the Cold War.⁷⁹

⁷⁶Scahill, *Blackwater*, 52-53.

⁷⁷Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 22, 28-30.

⁷⁸Scahill, *Blackwater*, 52.

⁷⁹Thomas Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century*, (Project for a New American Century: September 2000) 1-2.

Importantly, the document makes many of the same references as Rumsfeld later would in his own work. The studies *Rebuilding American's Defenses* references were the same as many of those he would later cite, showing that connection in ideology.⁸⁰ Those overlaps in thinking show themselves quickly as the text moves to discuss the shrinking defense budget as a shocking sign of things to come. One similarity is, the shared idea that nuclear armament should likely be dialed back without the threat of the Soviet Union in the way.⁸¹ It does stray from Rumsfeld in calling for the actual increase in the standing forces of the United States as the author of *Rebuilding America's Defenses* makes it clear that it is likely there will be more operations requiring American forces on the world stage.⁸²

Much like Rumsfeld the report calls for a great deal of technological reform as well. Once again, most reforms need to be made tactically and in the most cost effective way possible.⁸³ Projects that offer improvements but nothing revolutionary should be passed over for things that improve air power and network security consistently. Clearly, this echoes some of those same ideas that Rumsfeld would later draw on in his own report on how to rebuild the United States military forces. Importantly that includes the shared ideas of becoming more “private sector” in mindset just like Rumsfeld had called for. The idea that the Department of Defense could profit from being run like a business does seem to be a recurring thought throughout these discussions, though it is much more present in this report than in Rumsfeld's writing.⁸⁴ Clearly, the Project for a New

⁸⁰ Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 1-4.

⁸¹ Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 5.

⁸² Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 1-7.

⁸³ Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 6-7.

⁸⁴ Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 7-9, Rumsfeld, “Transforming the Military,” 28-30.

American Century certainly had more of an overt feeling toward privatization and it is clear Rumsfeld gleaned some influences from the report. This could mean that Rumsfeld may have been more open to privatization efforts than he appeared to be in his own work. Instead of overtly advocating for privatization, since that could have started a media backlash, as Blackwater later would, Rumsfeld may have used other policies to work toward privatization as an end goal. Certainly, Rumsfeld seems open to privatization and many of the issues in his planning paved the way for it to happen, so it seems there was something happening below the surface of Rumsfeld's planning.⁸⁵

It is also important to note that the report details that falling numbers in American personnel may become an issue when trying to project American power abroad. In calling for the increase in budget the report discusses some of the issues with the budget, as it stood at the time of writing, much smaller than it had been prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. While the report does try to focus that falling budget onto things like nuclear armament, there is some suggestion that a standing conventional force should be a priority as well.⁸⁶ Falling troop numbers could complicate the goals of the United States on the world stage. That point serves as one of the major differences from Rumsfeld. The report claims that on paper current forces appear to be enough, but that is in a best-case scenario and given that the occupation of Iraq became such a major issue it was not that best case. That dialogue of privatization combined with dropping troop numbers appears to have set in motion the future manpower issues that would occur in Iraq.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 6-9.

⁸⁶ Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 5.

⁸⁷Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 4-7.

The report has some places where it trails off to discuss the importance of American power across the globe. One of the primary goals that it claims the United States should pursue is to make sure that no other major power develops. This not only gives the Project's document a much clearer feeling of privatization but also one of American imperialism. The United States and its allies must remain the only dominant forces after the fall of the Soviet Union, according to this report. That call for American influence to be pushed across the globe is compounded by calls for that influence to be confirmed in areas where American influence is already strong. The report focuses on redeploying American forces away from Europe and instead pushing American power into East Asia. That, combined with some of the other overtures of the report, such as declaring prevention of the rise of another world power as a goal, makes it appear that the authors of the report saw China as a possible threat. That only appears compounded when the report discusses several times the growing nuclear power of China.⁸⁸ This scenario, used to balance the calls that while nuclear weapons should no longer be the focus of American defense, they should not be forgotten.⁸⁹

Rumsfeld also seemed to be greatly concerned with the ability of American forces to project their power across the globe. While from Rumsfeld's writing it is clear that he had no interest in the target of that projection being East Asia as with the Project of the New American Century, Rumsfeld clearly feels that the United States needs to throw its weight around. While Rumsfeld does discuss that, there will be changes away from the Cold War mindset he still advocates the use of American power abroad. It is not as direct of a call as in *Rebuilding America's Defenses* but it is still there. The discussion that the

⁸⁸ Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 17.

⁸⁹ Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 8, 17-18.

United States must act aggressively in some instances to defend its own best interests makes it clear. Once again it seems Rumsfeld used some of these ideas to his own ends, changing them enough that they could be tailored to a Middle Eastern policy. Such discussions on the imperialism of the United States would become a constant feature of the debate about the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The contracting companies that would develop in that occupation also became deeply tangled into that story as well.⁹⁰

While the report did push for East Asia as the major area of American redeployment it did not forget the Middle East. Desert Storm was a fresh memory at the time it was written and that shows. It directly names Saddam Hussain as an issue in the region and that air missions there will likely not end if Saddam remains in power. Though the call there is not to ever topple Saddam, the report calls to contain Saddam into Iraq even more effectively by increasing the American presence to the point that carriers would likely not have to stay in the Persian Gulf. The call there to contain Saddam is stands out as it almost perfectly echoes Cold War policy. There is no real reason to take the fight to Saddam in the eyes of the Report. As long as Saddam cannot strike American allies he is a non-threat that merely just needs to be watched and defended against. This viewpoint completely opposes Rumsfeld's later call for preemptive action if necessary to protect the United States. That dynamic of anything that would call for more troops being removed from how he used the report becomes striking.⁹¹

Largely, it appears that while Rumsfeld drew major influences in his writing from the report and the ideology of the organization behind it, Rumsfeld clearly altered it a great deal. If Rumsfeld had advocated for such ideology in its original form, there would

⁹⁰Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 24-25.

⁹¹Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 17-18.

not have been the calls in his work to reduce the amount of personnel in the military. Rumsfeld focuses instead on using the expanded military budget he calls for almost solely for technological advances. Rumsfeld makes it clear that he much prefers the combination of high-tech support combined with Special Forces on the ground as opposed to using more conventional military troops. The idea that shrinking numbers could be cost effective and free up more resources for more cost effective and efficient developments may seem sound but the use of ground troops appears more important in retrospect than Rumsfeld thought. While Rumsfeld's approach for flexibility and cost, effective research go along the original ideas of the report, but doing so while espousing the idea of increased military numbers appears to have put holes in the plan, as that call for more troops appears to have been a vital part of the plan.⁹²

Largely, the report's focus on increasing manpower as a deterrent to small regional threats like Saddam would have never allowed for the development of the major manpower shortages that would develop later in the occupation of Iraq. Some of those possible future issues that the report points out later becoming fact during Iraq's occupation. The report's authors did not necessarily condone preemptive attacks with the military, instead preferring to use shows of force to keep American power well grounded. In many ways, the original ideas of the report seem to have had more foresight than Rumsfeld. It planned for not just new research developments but also, increasing troop numbers across the board and using those troops as a deterrence as well as, possible forces for any minor theater war. These expansions in troop numbers are not even that extreme. It also discusses on how to move troops out of now non-critical regions, such as

⁹²Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 21-24.

parts of Western Europe, and using them to fortify new hotspots that are currently undermanned in comparison. The authors of the report may have never had their plans tested, but Rumsfeld in expanding on their ideas may have indirectly contributed to the rise of private contracting. His call for fewer troops, combined with the direct assertion that preemptive action could and should be employed, had a great influence on how the war in Iraq would play out.⁹³

Rumsfeld's push for a generalized plan is a major step away from the report. The report's focus on how to engage every region is snubbed by the idea that Rumsfeld thinks a general idea can engage every threat the same way. The idea that two hostile nations can be engaged in the same manner is certainly an oversimplification and may well have also led to problems in Iraq. Whereas, several plans on how to deal with each threat seems like it may be a sounder decision when engaging on the world stage. The idea that Iraq could be handled the same as a threat from the Balkans could be an issue when occupying forces no longer have a set plan on how to deal with the cultural differences. These various struggles in the Rumsfeld planning could well have been a reason why a lot of the planning of the occupation of Iraq happened after the invasion had already ended.⁹⁴

Overall it appears that the drop in military spending after the end of the Cold War, the reduction in troops, as well as political maneuvering allowed contracting companies to rise. That rise was not overnight but did happen relatively quickly with the time between the operations in the Balkans and the occupation of Iraq, which would be the height, being less than twenty years apart. Choices were actively made by Rumsfeld,

⁹³Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, 17-19.

⁹⁴Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military," 25-26.

which showed some of the faults in thinking on post-Cold War global strategy. At the same time politicians with ties to these companies, like Cheney, appeared to have helped pave the way by cooperating and forming alliances with these companies. However, those influences are far from the only ones that helped contracting reach its height. There are plenty of other players in the evolution of contracting left to be addressed.

Chapter 3

Another set of extremely important actors in the rise of private security contracting are Erik Prince himself and Paul Bremer, the head of Iraqi's Coalition Provisional Authority. Prince was the owner and driving force of Blackwater, using political ties, donations, and personal contacts to grow Blackwater into the largest of its kind to exist. Prince was one of the leading actors that may have even unintentionally exploited those various developments that opened the military to more privatization. Aside from Prince was Bremer, the leading occupation official in Iraq. Like other political figures mentioned in this work, Bremer made choices during his time in power that helped to facilitate that rise. Bremer and the occupation officials around him were guarded and escorted by Blackwater and smaller contracting company employees. That patronage would help these companies become a major part of the occupation policy. As well Bremer and other occupation officials went to great lengths to defend these contractors from repercussions for their actions. Thus, these two were highly influential in how the contracting system would develop and the exact route it would take as the occupation developed. In short, the steps taken by both Prince and Bremer served to confirm all those trends that had already been developing.

Prince himself had grand ambitions for Blackwater and is not shy about sharing them. Prince's own book states quite clearly that his end goal for Blackwater was to become a privately owned fourth branch of the military. Given the sheer size of the role

the company would eventually come to play in Iraq it seems like that goal was almost accomplished. Blackwater became a major player in the occupation under Prince's leadership and prior to that expansion it had been a major player in government training. Blackwater as a company was well connected from the start. The company's origins as a weapons training facility likely played into its favor, as government personnel from several agencies came to the impressive gun ranges located at the Blackwater training grounds. That gave the company access to many people in important political positions dating back to the mid and late nineties. Access like that would be a boon after 9/11 when Prince, aware of the manpower issues in both Afghanistan and Iraq, opted to approach the CIA to see what Blackwater could do to help.⁹⁵

That approach gained Blackwater one of its first major contracts defending American posts in Afghanistan. While their role in Iraq would be the centerpiece of the company's rise to power, it started out helping fill the significant gaps in American manpower in Afghanistan. After all, there had been few American troops deployed there as Special Forces operating with local allies handled the operations. That meant that after the fall of the Taliban, security in the area had completely collapsed. The CIA operating in the area needed someone to protect and guard their compounds and, despite Afghani allies, preferred to be defended by someone from outside of the country. That contract may have only been the first push made by Blackwater but it birthed the security division of the company. As far as business developments go that was one of the largest steps that could be taken by the company, as it allowed for everything that came after. Blackwater's status as one of the first companies to operate on a government contract was likely

⁹⁵Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 55-56.

favorable to getting further contracts as well, though Prince claims that all future contracts were won with competitive bids against rival companies.⁹⁶

Although Prince claims that his political connections were lacking, the result was that Blackwater acquired a contract with no competing bids allowed. The reason: Prince had helped train someone at the CIA's son and knew people there thus. That connection, combined with Prince's attempt to even join the CIA at a point, which may have been a political move, made many people in that agency aware of Blackwater. Clearly, those personal connections did matter despite how much Prince might claim it was not the case, as Prince says he did not have the time for contacts. Prince appears to have had a skillful ability at spreading the name of Blackwater by word of mouth. The company's success as a training facility may have helped to do that as well; a staff skilled enough to train Navy SEALs could surely be up to guarding checkpoints. Prince claims that Blackwater could do so well because all the power in making decisions was focused on him. Without the limitations of stockholders or boards to answer to he could act as quickly as he needed. Without needing to answer to anyone, Blackwater was just a simple order away from being on location and acting on behalf of whatever contract they could secure.⁹⁷

Oddly that is a point that both Prince and Scahill echo. Scahill's claim focuses on that concentration of power being one of the things that allowed Blackwater to grow so rapidly. The point Scahill elaborated was that Blackwater functioned much like an army with Prince at the head as the sole individual who could make decisions. Compounding that are the claims Scahill makes that show that many of the people who helped Prince found the company eventually stepped away from the company. If it was an intentional

⁹⁶Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 57.

⁹⁷Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 50-51.

move, as Scahill claims, it is hard to prove. Either way Prince was the sole executive power behind the company. That would be a position he would maintain until he eventually sold off the company once it became clear he could not make a comeback from the public relations disaster Iraq became. Prince's hold on power until that point may well have been how Blackwater managed to outmaneuver so much of the competition and come to be so central to the occupation of Iraq.⁹⁸

Apart from that essential consolidation of power, another element that played into Prince's favor was his wealth. Prior to leaving his tenure in the Navy SEALs Prince was a wealthy man. An inheritance gained from the death of his father put him into an excellent financial position. That wealth not only allowed him to finance the creation of Blackwater but also allowed him to keep the company running under almost any circumstance. Selling his father's businesses only increased the amount of resources that Prince had at his disposal once Blackwater was fully established, Prince being a multimillionaire before even setting out.⁹⁹ That wealth was what allowed Prince to get by without a board of directors or stockholders. The company was Prince's because of the amount of capital he could bring to bear. In some cases, that may be another large advantage Prince had over the competition, to the point that in many cases Prince's men were armed out of his own personal weapons collection. That ability to bankroll Blackwater and provide for it had a great deal to do with its success. Scahill holds that Prince's wealth was the key to the company being able to start at all. Such a large training facility would have been impossible without a massive amount of capital. That wealth

⁹⁸Scahill, *Blackwater*, 88-90.

⁹⁹Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 95-100.

would be important when trying to make Blackwater successful through political means.¹⁰⁰

Regardless of the means, Prince and Blackwater made an impression and was set up to acquire further contracts that would allow the company to expand. Also, helping the company to spread its name was Prince's connection to several politicians through his habit of campaign contributing.¹⁰¹ While Prince himself makes little to no mention of doing so, it is something that Scahill points out aggressively. Given Scahill's habit of trying to create a grand narrative of the massive push for privatization that seems obvious. In this instance, at least, there may be some more merit to that effort. After all, given that contractors who tend to give more in contribution tend to receive more contracts it would make sense that Prince would gladly donate. Prince's dream of Blackwater as the fourth branch of the military was rapidly becoming a possibility. It is also important to note that Prince also was carrying out a family tradition as his father did donate excessively as well. Both men donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to various politicians, making sure that the wealth of the Prince family saw some use in politics. Prince may have gotten more of a return on that money than his father ever did.¹⁰²

It is important though to see how Prince used those donations to try and increase his standing and by extension that of Blackwater. As mentioned, Prince and his family had donated to politicians for some time, that money going exclusively to Republicans. Prince advanced with that idea and continued to donate to Republicans as he founded and then put Blackwater into motion. Even prior to founding the company Prince was

¹⁰⁰Scahill, *Blackwater*, 78-79.

¹⁰¹Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 56-57.

¹⁰²Scahill, *Blackwater*, 84-87.

somewhat active in politics, despite Prince's claims to not being that political of a person and wanting to stay out of politics. The fact Prince was involved in politics, at least nominally through donations, prior to founding Blackwater seems important. It may be that he just intended to continue being involved as he had been prior to starting Blackwater. Certainly, that is one way to look at it, especially given how much of a family tradition it appeared to be for the Princes. It is still hard to ignore how much Prince had to gain by donating to politicians, as that would only help Blackwater. The political right would be a constant ally to Blackwater and other contracting companies.¹⁰³

As much as Prince would like to lead readers to believe that he was not political, research into Prince's donation records quickly prove otherwise. Clearly, he kept up the family tradition of donating to conservatives and even took it further, tending to several thousand more than his father usually would and donating more often. There were a few of the donations that were directly funded by Blackwater itself, with Prince acting as the owner, but there are plenty from Prince as an individual. Those donations range from everything from politicians who are running for the United States senate to people running for state level offices. Usually these donations are either claimed by one of Prince's smaller companies or "Prince Group" a company set up by his father for what appears to be only donating purposes. Those two donations from Blackwater itself were helping to fund a run for the Senate and one for a governor position. It does make those two donations stand out but it is hard to say why Prince would break from his normal

¹⁰³"FEC Individual Contribution Search Results" Accessed, February 19, 2017.

donation cycle and give to someone directly from Blackwater. The donations from Prince do seem to follow a trend that contradicts some elements of Prince family tradition.¹⁰⁴

While Prince was politically active prior to building Blackwater or its rise to power Prince's donations were much less prior to that. Before the security division of the company was founded Prince's donations records number only about eight total contributions, most of which are at least a thousand dollars with one only being five hundred. After that development, though, Prince's donations become much more numerous. Every year there are multiple donations to both state and federal campaigns. There seems to have been something that drove Prince to donate more once Blackwater was fully up and running and had the security division operating. That may well have been the motivation to gain more contracts as well as honor old alliances and friendships that his father had built when he was the one donating. Regardless, the sheer amount that Prince was donating, usually at minimum of a few thousand dollars, may well have been designed to gather as much political favor as possible. Given that contracting companies tend to profit from donations that seems like it may have been the case. That sudden rise in donations does seem to mimic the rapid rise of Blackwater through the early two thousands. It is worth noting that Prince's donations did not stop after the collapse of Blackwater, though they did slow, and have made another major rise in the last election cycle.¹⁰⁵

That may well be an attempt to bring back his political clout which was nearly destroyed by the havoc Blackwater unleashed in Iraq. Once again that is hard to prove but Prince's sudden return after a major drop off is interesting. After 2006 Prince's donations

¹⁰⁴"FEC Individual Contribution Search Results"

¹⁰⁵"FEC Individual Contribution Search Results"

dropped lower than they had been prior to the year 2000, only donating around ten times total in that period compared to over twenty times prior to Blackwater's collapse.¹⁰⁶ That overlaps with the period after he had sold out of Blackwater and the company was moving on without him. The remaining parts that he still had control over found themselves handling relatively minor contracts in Afghanistan that dealt with training local police and security forces for when they would eventually be taking over those roles from the Americans who were still carrying them out. With such a plummet in what his companies could do and the number of contracts they had sinking to rock bottom, it appears Prince no longer had reason to donate.¹⁰⁷ That does pose a problem for the narrative that Prince had any reason do this for anything other than business reasons. The donations from the post 2006 period are limited in scope and usually came up only in periods when major federal elections were ongoing. Prior to that period Prince was donating to someone at least every year and that suddenly dropped off to points when there were years he did not donate at all. Those years were off years for elections but that had not previously stopped him from backing campaigns.¹⁰⁸

Following that drop off was a massive resurgence in donations by Prince through various companies. In the period leading up the 2016 elections Prince was clearly at work. Prince donated money to various Republican candidates, and the number of donations far outmatched what it had been in the last few years combined. In fact, within just a month he had donated to twenty-three organizations just prior to the election. That sudden reappearance onto the political scene stands out, given its timing. It seems that

¹⁰⁶"FEC Individual Contribution Search Results"

¹⁰⁷"FEC Individual Contribution Search Results"

¹⁰⁸"FEC Individual Contribution Search Results"

when there was little to gain, such as the collapse of Blackwater from its business empire, there was also little reason to donate. Though when there was a chance for a major shakeup, which the 2016 election cycle certainly offered, Prince was encouraged to step forward more than Prince had been previously. Given Prince's huge surge in donations it certainly seems that Prince was more than ready to take part in this election cycle. Those donations also ranged in amount from several thousand dollars to a hundred thousand. This marked a massive increase in not just the number of donations but the amount per donation that Prince was willing to throw at these campaigns, as previously Prince had never donated more than twenty thousand in any single donation.¹⁰⁹

On looking at these donation records it appears hard to defend anything other than the fact that these donations were politically motivated. Prince's cycle of political donation fell off perfectly with Blackwater's decline, only to rise again as the politics of the United States were rocked by the 2016 election cycle. It appears that Prince may have taken that upheaval as a chance for him to start again after falling off the scene with the collapse of Blackwater. It may also have been a gambit to avoid trouble after running afoul of United States intelligence by attempting to start security companies in Libya with the end goal of being paid to block refugees. That attempt to start companies abroad also says something important about Prince's motivations. One way or another he was determined to make his plan for Blackwater or, a company like it, to succeed. Prince's attempts to create these private security companies elsewhere in the world speak to that. Operating outside of the United States or out from under its jurisdiction makes these companies much closer to traditional mercenaries in a legal sense, with the roles these

¹⁰⁹"FEC Individual Contribution Search Results"

companies were looking at undertaking not being escorting and defense but full on stabilization efforts. These are roles that far outstripped anything even Blackwater had done, as operating under the United States limited that company to purely defensive roles.¹¹⁰

Aside from his attempts to create these companies elsewhere in the world Prince managed to run some contracts for other nations and even the United States. His various attempts to create these companies saw efforts across the Middle East and Africa. All of this was done with money that might have been from a Chinese company. Prince's connection to foreign companies based in China may well have been part of the reason he became politically active once again after 2010. Holding positions in those Chinese companies may have looked as bad for his image as his attempts to develop Blackwater style companies abroad. Those companies themselves took steps against Prince when it became apparent Prince may be trying to use their funds for such a purpose. Clearly, whatever Prince was up to in the six years between selling off Blackwater and the sudden reappearance in playing politics did not increase Prince's credibility. However, those opportunities Prince found abroad might have proven to be an important source of capital for this sudden return to the political world. Regardless, it was clear that Prince was determined to try and stay involved with business ventures wherever possible.¹¹¹

That fact that Prince moved to become politically involved again after these efforts were discovered does open some important questions. Did Prince intend to make this move prior to being caught, and is this an attempt to resurrect his business empire within the United States? Or was this an attempt to use rapid development of political

¹¹⁰Matthew Cole and Jeremy Scahill, "Erik Prince in the Hot Seat", *The Intercept*, March 24, 2016

¹¹¹Cole and Scahill, "Erik Prince in the Hot Seat."

favors to get United States intelligence officers off his back? It is hard to tell which of these is the case but both might be true. Prince's attempts to start these foreign companies and the sudden return to donating politically may just be that drive to carry out Prince's long-standing vision: the creation of a company that would operate as a fourth branch of the United States military. If that company had to be funded by side ventures like his attempts in Libya, that appears to be what Prince was willing to do. Though once caught attempting to put those companies in motion it may well have been in Prince's best interest to try and make political allies again as the election neared. It is clear these most recent donations had some sort of raw motivation behind them, be it a comeback or escape.¹¹²

Regardless of motivation Prince seems to have always had something to gain with campaign donations, whether gaining contracts for the security and training divisions of Blackwater or trying to block investigations into Prince's business ventures taking place outside of the United States. Once again, money is always tangible into how private contracting plays out in the United States. The ability to move capital and develop political favors appears to have been priceless in Blackwater's rise. The more money the company could procure the more it could share with political allies to help ensure they reached office or remained there. Those political allies would in turn use their positions to try and secure more contracts or help the company avoid trouble, such as some of those figures trying to block the committee on oversight that was put together to question Prince about the company. This symbiosis created a cycle that saw these two groups grow to defend each other and allowed for Blackwater to become such a giant in the

¹¹²Cole and Scahill, "Erik Prince in the Hot Seat."

occupation of Iraq. That relationship may have influenced why the left and the media would become so hostile to Blackwater and other contractors.¹¹³

All those elements make Prince the leader that a company like Blackwater needed to become so successful. Massive amounts of personal capital, concentrated control, and the ability to develop both personal and financial political ties were all key elements of Blackwater's success. All these tie together to present Prince's contribution to helping Blackwater rise in fame. That contribution was a large part of the company's rise, as without Prince it is likely a company like Blackwater may have struggled to get much bigger than a gun range. Prince had both the ability and means to take advantage of the various flaws that had created the manpower shortage within the United States military. That desire to create and pioneer a company that would become the fourth branch of the military appears to have been a driving force in elevating Blackwater. It does appear that Prince was the head of a business empire and did a great deal to make it so. Though as important a role that Prince played in bringing Blackwater to power, Prince is not the only one to make such a major impact on the rise of contracting.

Another of the important figures is Paul Bremer, as without the way Bremer chose to govern Iraq it is likely that Blackwater may still not have gotten as much power as it did. Authors like Scahill claim that Blackwater was something of a Praetorian guard for Bremer and the other occupation officials of Iraq. While such imperial titles are not flattering, there is something to be said about the fact that Blackwater and companies like it, and not the United States military protected most of the occupation officials. In fact, many like Bremer openly admitted to seeing these private security details as far more safe

¹¹³Scahill, *Blackwater*, 1-2.

for them than United States military personnel. Scahill claims it is due to shady business dealings or some sort of outside relationship between these officials and the contracting companies, but it is hard to prove that is the case. Certainly, these companies were willing to do some political favors for their supporters but they also did prove to be effective at their jobs even if that efficiency was hindered by the instability and bad press associated with private security.¹¹⁴

Aside from just patronizing contracting companies, Bremer had a major role in how contractors would operate in Iraq. Bremer's role in Iraq was much like that of a governor. Until power could be handed back to the Iraqi people he was to be one of the sole figures of power. That position of power made Bremer one of the most important people in Iraq and one of the most powerful people there as well. With that position Bremer had the authority to do a great deal in Iraq and was expected to. The Bush administration sent Bremer to Iraq with the purpose of bringing major change to the nation of Iraq once the occupation was under way. Given that goal Bremer set out to bring major changes to Iraq before that handover of power would eventually remove him. One of Bremer's first moves was to target all agencies and military organizations that had been associated with Saddam. In doing that Bremer completely disbanded all military and intelligence groups that had been in Iraq. He also completely dismantled the Ba'ath party, putting all low-ranking members up to a review that would see if they could retain their positions.¹¹⁵

That removal of those people from their positions was intended to give Iraq a fresh start and freedom from the influences of Saddam. The actual effects of removing

¹¹⁴Scahill, *Blackwater*, 11-13.

¹¹⁵Wright and Reese, *On point II*, 26.

those people were almost the opposite of that intention. Removing those people from power utterly crippled Iraqi civil operations. Without many of those Ba'ath party personnel working on civil institutions Iraq nearly lost all bureaucratic functions. That created a great deal of chaos and led to large sections of the Sunni population facing unemployment which would bolster the later insurgency groups operating against the United States occupation forces. These actions would see gaps in both coalition officials and local Iraqi leaders in attempts to manage affairs of the country successfully after the end of Saddam's regime. Those two decisions effectively made sure that the chaos of the occupation was already more of a problem than it could have been. As well Bremer made the decision to delay handing over power to Iraq leaders after making those decisions, an act that would give many in Iraq the impression that the United States and its allies were not there to liberate the nation from Saddam. Bremer's earliest actions started to wear on the goodwill between the local populace and the coalition forces and that was something that would be felt through efforts to stabilize Iraq.¹¹⁶

Many of those choices that left Iraqis unable to deal with the day to day managing of their affairs meant that slack would likely be taken up by coalition officials. Those choices were made quickly and as the full effect of them was being realized the coalition forces were still attempting to figure out what exactly the end goal of their mission would be. With the Iraqi government toppled it seemed that planners had overlooked what exactly to follow through with. That chaos in planning, combined with the removal of so many civil officials meant that coalition forces found themselves shouldered with the burden of governing and managing even the day to day affairs of an entire nation. While

¹¹⁶Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 26-27.

the invasion force had been completely sufficient to deal with the Iraqi army, occupying and governing an entire nation was not something that they had the numbers to deal with. As more and more issues stretched manpower thin it became apparent that more people would be needed to handle the many issues pressing the occupation forces.¹¹⁷

Bremer's critics also hold that he made several mistakes in how he developed his plans to try and stabilize Iraq. As he looked for Iraqi advisors to try and see what solution may be the best course, Bremer sought out exiles, people who had been forced out of the country under Saddam's rule as a threat to his power. His attempts to try and rebuild many of the government systems, Iraq proved to have not been well consulted and proved to be deeply flawed, as they were put into practice. That lack of well-informed decision-making would become a theme of Bremer's control in Iraq throughout the occupation. While he went to great lengths to be consulted on issues he would often make a mistake with whom he chose to deal with. He often ignored former Iraqi officials and locals in favor of those exiles or people he thought aligned more with his political goals for Iraq. Those efforts not only introduced flawed systems but the Iraqi populace perceived many of the attempts as failures or insults. Many of them felt completely left out of the decision-making process as only the selected advisors were allowed their input.¹¹⁸

The removal of those civil officials removed many of the important people that Bremer could have drawn advice from. The chance to learn about past or even some existing problems was lost. That would be one of the more chaotic mistakes as the provisional government showed that it would have next to no tolerance for former

¹¹⁷Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 27-28.

¹¹⁸Eric Stover, Hanny Megally, and Hania Mufti, "Bremer's "Gordian Knot": Transitional Justice and the US Occupation of Iraq," *Human Rights Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (2005): 830-834.

Ba'athists. This, in retrospect, may have been a major issue for the occupation as the assumption that it would be a short-term operation for the United States military proved to be false. Combined with many of the early mistakes by Bremer in trying to build Iraq's justice system and other government entities it soon became clear that the coalition forces were completely under prepared. The idea that they might be seen as liberators and their presence would be welcomed failed as well. As it became apparent that several insurgency movements were brewing in Iraq it was clear the stabilizing of the nation would be much more dangerous than was previously thought. The early occupation was much more of a whirlwind than anyone thought it would be but the decisions made by Bremer and other occupation officials did not help the situation.¹¹⁹

The lack of reliable advisors was not just a problem on the Iraq side of planning. Many officials back in Washington who were prepared and extremely experienced were also passed over when it came to planning the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Some of these officials would have been well suited to forming a working plan for the occupation officials on how to proceed in Iraq. For some unexplained reason the Bush administration chose to pass over these people in favor of other choices. Excluding those senior officials from any part of the planning for how to proceed with Iraq could be another error in the invasion and occupation. It is hard to say why this choice was made but the effects were just as serious as ignoring many of the potential advisors who could have been drawn from the Iraqi population. It seems plausible to say that the choice to leave senior officials out of the decision-making process may have been part of that school of thought championed by Rumsfeld that sought a major shakeup in the way the United States

¹¹⁹Stover, Megally, and Mufti, "Bremer's "Gordian Knot"" 834-836.

handled its military affairs. In calling for a constant drive to step away from Cold War methods of problem solving it may have caused the administration to try look to newer ideas and fresher minds on how to confront the occupation and rebuilding of Iraq.¹²⁰

That choice to send many of the Iraqi officials away is one that is repeatedly brought up by critics, as well as occupation officials' complete disconnect from the Iraqi people. There certainly is something to these claims as the high hopes for Iraq quickly saw it become one of the most dangerous places in the world, a place that would need private security operators to keep occupation officials alive as the people who were supposed to think highly of those officials plotted to kill them. That major disconnect became even worse as the occupation officials set up the Green Zone and completely walled themselves off from the Iraqi people. The problems of Bremer and his people being selective on who they interacted with only became worse once there were literal walls between them and the people who they were in effect governing. Once the Green Zone was set up occupation officials spoke almost exclusively to other Americans. That would not help smooth over the occupation as Bremer and others continued to not consult with Iraqis on how to proceed. These choices made tensions swell, and extra security that was needed to keep these occupation officials safe only added to the already vicious cycle that saw contractors fill Iraq.¹²¹

The poor planning prior to the invasion was also a major factor in how the occupation was carried out. While Bremer did not factor into that planning it affected the situation he would be placed in charge of. The mindset that the occupation would be a quick transitional period proved to be false rather rapidly. The steps taken to try and

¹²⁰Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Who Killed Iraq?" *Foreign Policy*, no. 156 (2006): 37-38.

¹²¹Chandrasekaran, "Who Killed Iraq?" 36-37.

rebuild the country after that proved to not be the case only furthered the appearance that no real plan had been put in place. Something that is usually forgotten is that men like Bremer covered the planning for Iraq. While military officials are a major part of the narrative they are serving alongside another large group of civilians who were attempting to help rebuild Iraq. The struggle of those civilian officials to put together a working Iraq government or even basic national systems shows how little planning had been done. The idea that such an operation as removing Saddam Hussain from power and replacing him with a more democratic government would be something that could be done quickly and easily proved to be an issue.¹²²

That information certainly makes the case that Bremer acted as best he could given various circumstances. The plans laid out for Iraq were already simple at best and the fact that the administration proved unwilling to listen to some of the minds who could do a great deal to help it only made things worse. Bremer was put into a situation where almost every decision he had planned on likely had little in the way of advice. His own actions did make those decisions worse as he could have done plenty more to welcome Iraqis into the decision-making process but did not. Still from the start the planning stages on how post-invasion Iraq should be handled proved to have been as rocky as the occupation. Rapid assumption quickly led to flawed plans which set decision makers like Bremer up to only make more flawed plans and decisions. That lack of planning seems to have set up for many of the issues that would lead to contractors to come spilling into Iraq. After all, the plans that Iraq would be a simple mission called for relatively few

¹²²Kevin Kosar and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "There was no Plan," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 67, No. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 2007) 1077-1079.

troops to try and occupy Iraq, but as things descended into chaos it became clear that would not be enough.¹²³

That manpower issue would be one of the leading problems that would see private contractors flood into Iraq. These were companies like Halliburton who handled primarily security functions but also those like Blackwater. As the occupation forces found themselves having to deal with more and more of the local governance issues more of these contractors would be brought in. The simple problem arose that there were not enough coalition forces to deal with every single problem. Thus, issues like defending certain municipal buildings, running supply caravans, and protection of occupation officials like Bremer would have to be passed onto private security. All of that occurred as a background to the confusion on how long the mission in Iraq might even be. Some forces indicated that a withdrawal might happen far earlier than it did. The amount of confusion even among those carrying out the occupation could well have played into the hiring of many of these companies. The fact it became a long-term problem may well have never even been considered a problem. In a sense it became a rapid stop-gap solution deployed against an ongoing and evolving problem.¹²⁴

Aggravating these issues, Bremer failed to grasp many of the complexities of Iraqi ethnic, religious, and regional identities. While the breakup of Yugoslavia was in many ways caused by ethnic and national identity issues, it did not suffer as much from these issues as Iraq. In the Balkans those identity issues were limited in scope and the problem was that civil war there focused on keeping Yugoslavia together as a nation before many of the ethnic issues were accounted for. As such once it was clear that the

¹²³Kosar and Chandrasekaran, "There was no Plan," 1078-1080.

¹²⁴Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 28-29.

Balkans were going to exist as several independent states much of the violence died down as NATO could quickly suppress most of the ethnic violence led by the Serbs. Though it is also important to note that the ethnic issues in the Balkans also had a geographic component, which the issues in Iraq would not have.¹²⁵

Meanwhile though, Iraqi identity problems were far more complex and became clearer after the invasion was in motion. Local identities often usurp any idea of an “Iraqi” identity and thus the idea of handling Iraq as a single unit became much more problematic. The result there is that the comparison between the Balkans and Iraq broke down. Unlike in the Balkans ethnic and identity problems in Iraq could not be quickly suppressed nor was the country being redrawn considered a possibility. The idea that Iraq could quickly be occupied and then withdrawn from with the help of contractors like the Balkans seems to be a poor comparison. Not only are some of these identities locally based some of them are religious or kinship based, which only further breaks down any comparison between operations in the Balkans during the breakup of Yugoslavia. As that comparison was likely one of Bremer’s only precedents to turn on for an occupation, as Desert Storm had not had to deal with occupation, there was going to be a struggle. Iraq’s identity politics and issues were already frustratingly complex and to make matters worse the only unifying force in Iraq, the Ba’ath Party, was deconstructed by Bremer. Bremer did not grasp these complexities and unfortunately the best comparison that planners had to give Bremer was a poor one with the Balkans. Failure to come to terms with those

¹²⁵Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, (Harrisonburg: Yale University Press, 2007) 588-591.

identity politics and the fact Iraq was not going to be allowed to segment, as Yugoslavia had done, mean that tensions were only going to rise.¹²⁶

The problem at the core was that the more issues that arose with the occupation the more people the coalition would have to throw at those problems. Thus, there was a massive surge of military personnel flooding into Iraq but also contractors. The rate of growth for both groups being nearly equal as the ratio of normal troops to contractors, reached one to one at the height of the occupation.¹²⁷ It became obvious that escaping the occupation of Iraq was not going to be as simple as was first thought, with more manpower funneling into the country. The result: contractors became as major of a part of that occupation force as the militaries they were serving alongside. They were tasked with servicing or protecting large parts of the coalition throughout Iraq and did just that. As the occupation had to slowly cover the entire country, contractors were going to be brought along though their presence was most felt in areas that were central to the occupation forces governing Iraq. Throughout all that Bremer was at the center trying to manage the various affairs of the occupation and trying to develop Iraq into something completely different than it had been prior to the invasion.¹²⁸

As has been seen with previous major decision makers Bremer shows that once again that there are several factors feeding into how Blackwater rose so massively. On his side, though there are also the questions of how they could become such a reckless force in the occupation. The violence that followed these security contractors became possibly the longest legacy of their part in the occupation. It seemed that anywhere specifically

¹²⁶Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 23-26.

¹²⁷Gary D. Smith, "Eisenhower's Warning Realized: The Issues with the U.S. Reliance on Contractors in the Battle Space" (Joint Forces Staff College 2008).

¹²⁸Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 30-35.

Blackwater contractors went there was trouble with the occupation, including the deaths of some of their employees in Fallujah which seemed to be retaliation for actions taken by the occupation forces prior to those killings. It raises the question if Bremer did anything to make these violent events more likely to occur or could have done anything to stop them. As it stands Bremer must have been aware of some of these more violent events, though by the time the worst of them would happen he would be out of power as the Iraqis reclaimed government for themselves.¹²⁹

Largely, it is Bremer's issuing of Order 17 that is considered to have made contractors like those from Blackwater think themselves above the law. The Order stated that the new incoming Iraqi government could not take legal action against contractors within their country. Critics like Scahill claim that this is a clear sign that these men got far better treatment than they would ever deserve. His stance was that no matter what these men were accused of doing little to nothing was done about it under Bremer or after him. Scahill points out that the logic behind the Order was supposed to be that the United States would deal with whatever crimes these people committed. Scahill counters that that was never actually the case.¹³⁰ There does appear to be something to this as until 2014 none of these contractors ever served prison time for what they did in Iraq, with a trial for those men being stuck in the works for several years before it ever got off the ground. Even then, it was still the United States that did arrest and convict these people, not the Iraqi government. There are plenty of other violent incidents that Blackwater

¹²⁹Scahill, *Blackwater*, 15-17.

¹³⁰Scahill, *Blackwater*, 14-15.

contractors and even other companies' employees are tied to. Those events have never spawned trials and the current convictions stand as the only ones of their kind.¹³¹

Order 17 does not seem to have helped Bremer's policies or their image. The order at face value was designed to protect American citizens from being tried and convicted in a country that many occupation officials could not carry out the justice. In practice, it appears to have played out like an imperialistic policy calling back to the immunities enjoyed by Europeans in China. The fact it allowed these contractors to ignore Iraqi law has been pointed out by critics, as something, many of these people may have viewed as a free pass. Those critics may well have been justified, as violence by contractors against Iraqis remained a near constant issue even after Bremer had left Iraq. Clearly, this was not the intent of the Order but it did in fact make the employees of companies like Blackwater think they could act as they pleased, with efforts to cover their trials and keep them out of trouble only serving to prove them right.¹³²

The legacy of Bremer is one that shows how the planning of the Iraq War was deeply flawed. The rush to action in hopes the people of Iraq would welcome a democratic government, with open arms, proved to be a misstep. Moreover, Bremer did nothing to help the situation as he only developed more problems for Iraq by taking such an adamant stance that no Ba'athists could be allowed to keep doing their jobs. This left a large swath of the country unemployed and made sure occupation and military officials had no locals to learn from. His choices and the decisions that led to the post-war plans being so hastily done paved the way for Iraq to become a quagmire. With all the other various trends and developments in privatization that had already occurred the door was

¹³¹Pete Yotes, "7 years later Blackwater guards go on trial," *The Post and Courier*, Jun 9, 2014.

¹³²"US Judge Dismisses Charges Against Blackwater Iraq Killings" *BBC News*, December 31, 2009.

more than open to someone like Prince, who was poised to take advantage of all those elements. The surge of contractors into Iraq and their behavior in the country would only further serve to destabilize the region.

Chapter 4

In both of its missions in the Middle East the United States has found itself lacking in manpower to keep up its occupations. There are many non-combat officials on the ground that need to be protected and compounds that need protection. As demands grew on the needs and goals of American troops, the lack of manpower was exacerbated. There were only so many marines and soldiers to do an ever-growing number of tasks. Not to mention in the early parts of the occupation the military found itself in need of more logistical help. Historically, nations facing the problem of manpower shortage have always filled those gaps with private individuals. When the British could not fully outfit an army to bring against the Americans in the Revolutionary War, they hired out the men of Hesse-Cassel. In a situation, much like what the United States would be facing in Iraq the British found themselves short on men to carry out a massive military operation. Thus, they sought out the Hessians, in doing so they brought private individuals into the conflict who they paid more than their own soldiers. The British would encounter similar problems from their mercenaries that the United States would later deal with as well. The opposition saw the use of such troops as offensive as did many in the British Isles. As well the Hessians only worsened both of those situations as they developed a reputation for being looters. Thus, the British mission in attempting to put down the American Revolution suffered as Hessians soured goodwill between the British and loyal

colonists.¹³³

America, under similar pressures did much the same thing under the guise of private contractors. These companies became central to the American missions in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and their use became problematic to the American government. Uncontrolled and unrestricted contractors caused such ill will with the Iraqi government and locals that Blackwater, the largest of them, was banned from operating within its borders. As such, the argument has been made that these companies' men on the ground served to destroy goodwill between the American and Iraqi governments, and made the mission to stabilize Iraq an even more difficult and costly struggle. Much like the British found out during the Revolution, private sector solution to a man power problem could make a mission objective even more difficult to handle militarily.

As the door to privatization opened it made many business-minded people become aware of other problems in the military that could be solved for a profit. One of these was training facilities, namely those for the Navy. Often the Navy, even the SEALs, would have to borrow ranges from the Army. Given the advanced training required by SEALs and other special forces these ranges were often considered to be lacking. Two such critics were Erik Prince, the man who would later found Blackwater, and one of his instructors from the SEALs, Al Clark. The two of them decided that a private company could easily set up the complex facilities it would take to do advanced training for law enforcement and military personnel. Clark had the idea far before meeting Prince due to his time on military ranges and seeing a great deal of what they lacked but never had the resources to do so. Prince, the son of a wealthy business owner, was not as limited in that

¹³³ Richard M. Ketchum, *The winter soldiers*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday. 1973) 278-279.

regard.¹³⁴ It is also important to point out that Prince had a good business sense on where to place Blackwater. He chose to base Blackwater in North Carolina on part of the Dismal Swamp. It was a cheap land purchase that would also put Blackwater in the back yard of Washington as well as several military bases. That placement made the company extremely appealing not just to the military, but also many of the federal agencies in D.C.¹³⁵

The development of the security division of Blackwater is bound with the story of the 9/11 attacks. In the chaos that came after, many business ventures started looking for ways that could help the government in whatever actions would come next. Prince was certainly no exception to that. In the days following the attacks Prince attempted to join on with the CIA and to take part in any ongoing investigations. While denied on both accounts Prince's willingness to take part in the government's efforts was certainly noted. Prince's contacts within the CIA started informing him on all the problems these campaigns might be facing; that knowledge as well as Prince's previous work for many government agencies played into his favor. The initial invasion of Iraq had little in the way of opportunity for Blackwater. It was when American Special Forces in Afghanistan started to make headway in toppling the Taliban it became apparent there may be something to gain.¹³⁶ Given Prince's connections to the CIA and other government agencies he was quickly able to hear about the manpower problems there. Prince quickly

¹³⁴Scahill, *Blackwater*, 90-92.

¹³⁵Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 32-34.

¹³⁶Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 50-56.

offered the solution that private security would likely be the quickest solution to the problem and offered up a low bid for the contract.¹³⁷

That contract was the start of private security contracting in the Middle East. Blackwater's defense of CIA operations in Afghanistan soon led to them ferreting out other problems that plagued the American mission in the Middle East. When Iraq came under full American occupation after the ousting of Saddam Hussein, it became clear long term logistics were going to be problematic. That problem was one Prince was more than willing to deal with. Over time Blackwater positioned itself with a fleet of cargo aircraft to become a logistical arm of the military. The helicopters run by Blackwater alone became a major part of transporting politicians and cargo. As the company began to become more and more entangled with American efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, it became even bigger.¹³⁸

The operations being carried out by Blackwater became monetarily impressive. Before the company was banned from working in Iraq, at its height the company controlled around one billion dollars in government contracts. This made it not only the first of these private security companies to be hired on by the American government but one of the largest. The cost of those contracts in the end meant that a great deal of every tax dollar being spent on military spending by the U.S government was going to private contractors.¹³⁹ It was a lucrative business and as such Blackwater did not remain the only company in the field for long. Though they remained the largest, that one billion reflected not just their operators on the ground but the sheer amount of logistics they were dealing

¹³⁷Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 56-57.

¹³⁸Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 40-46, 55-57.

¹³⁹Scahill, *Blackwater*, 1-2.

with for the American military, Blackwater'. They were on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan shuttling around American officials. In Iraq, these were men like Paul Bremer and John McCain who both openly preferred them to American troops for security. The attention they gained from escorting these people only increased the attention on these private contractors and served to get their companies out there.¹⁴⁰

Once these groups were that well established they reached a one to one ratio with American ground troops in Iraq. That statistic in the wake of this massive rise of private contracting companies reflected a huge increase from what that number once was. In Desert Storm the ratio between private contractors and American troops was one to sixty-five. That massive increase meant that these men would have as much of an interaction with the Iraqi population as the American troops did. That is certainly the case, as these men interacted with the people of Iraq and shaped relations with them through their actions. Everything about their behavior was just as important as those of American troops and this was compounded by the fact that the American government had little say in their behavior. The policies on oversight for these private companies abroad were certainly problematic. There simply weren't provisions for PMCs and often the matter of employees that were an issue was largely left up to the company. Meaning, most of the time anyone who did something they weren't supposed to, no matter if it was a crime or not, often just got sent home.¹⁴¹

The route that was taken that allowed for such operational freedom on the part of contractors only served to increase tensions. There is the argument that they caused

¹⁴⁰Simons, *Master of war*, 79-81.

¹⁴¹Smith, "Eisenhower's Warning Realized: The Issues with the U.S. Reliance on Contractors in the Battlespace " i-3.

tension even when they were doing their job correctly. Now they did their job correctly often, as under their watch many of the most important officials in Iraq survived. This includes a list of extremely high level politicians who are more associated with politics stateside than the occupation. In that regard they certainly had successes, as political deaths on their watch were non-existent. Often though, the cost of this was a trail of Iraqi bodies and the fear of the populace. Case in point: late in Blackwater's time in Iraq, traffic officers could see their vehicles coming and would stop traffic at roundabouts, knowing the contractors would be coming through the wrong way. Regardless, the tension that they caused makes it clear that they left a hostile impression. Their ill behavior, openly expected by Iraqi people, and their traffic violations are the least of the horror stories that came out of Iraq.¹⁴²

The many stories that involved Blackwater in Iraq saw them involved in many of the large events of the military campaign there. The company even found itself swept up in the events of Fallujah. Blackwater operators played a major role in what would become the second battle for that city. That is, the story of that second conflict for Fallujah was the death of four Blackwater contractors. The ambush that killed these men became an event that Blackwater hotly contested for some time. They claimed corruption within the Iraqi police of Fallujah had led to the attack. These men were killed in a horrible fashion while leading a caravan of goods back to an American military camp. Their deaths are also largely considered to be the start of the major uprising in the city that would have to be put down by the American military. Those deaths also represent the first media reaction at home to contractors. While the stories following these men's

¹⁴²Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 176-177.

deaths were not followed up with any investigation into private contracting, the media became aware.¹⁴³

After Fallujah, there were of course more jobs for Blackwater, they kept up the usual political convoys, though none of those would compare to the defensive action in Najaf. The base was an important compound to the interim coalition government of Iraq. The extremely mixed group known as the CPA, which was headed up by Paul Bremer, handled Iraq's affairs until, the full handover, could be done by the Americans. This area had already been a hotbed of militia activity as soon as the Americans were on the ground. The Shi'a majority there was roused into activity by a zealous young cleric. A crack down by Bremer saw one of the chief advisors to this cleric arrested for supposed involvement in a crime. This incensed him and caused him to attempt to besiege the CPA compound in Najaf. Once again showing Bremer's lack of forethought on the many identity issues at work in Iraq.¹⁴⁴

Regardless of how the city itself came to be overwhelmed, soon the militia was bearing down on the compound, which was undermanned according to nearly all sources. Najaf had no American combat troops, just some communication technicians in the area who were helping to rebuild infrastructure damaged in the invasion. There were also a handful of troops from other nations, like Ecuador, though the primary staffing of armed guards on the base were just a few Blackwater contractors. That force barely broke into the double digits was unarguably surrounded by a group, which was well over two hundred in size, threatened to overrun the compound at any minute. This would certainly

¹⁴³Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 110-115.

¹⁴⁴Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 130-135.

not be a comfortable position for any person to find themselves in but these are the parts of the story that are the least up for interpretation by authors and readers.¹⁴⁵

What came next at Najaf was the chaos of battle. The handful of defenders decided to hold the compound as the American diplomat there decided that handing over the CPA compound and the city would be a failing on his part. The handful of Blackwater operators, troops from El Salvador, a United States Marine, and National Guardsmen were left to that task. Prince does make his employees the heroes of the siege, as they appear to have taken charge of the situation when it deteriorated. Largely this is confirmed by more sources and will present an issue later on. The story of this in Prince's account unfolds like an action movie from there, with his employees leading the defenders to hold the compound despite what in reality were overwhelming odds. More than a few of the men who ended up on the roof of the CPA compound defending it were shot. The events that unfolded saw a nearby hospital blown up by the defenders, and thousands of rounds of ammunition spent. The saving grace of the defenders were the small helicopters that Blackwater had several hundred of in Iraq. Those helicopters allowed for additional ammunition to be dropped off to the defenders, a vital part of the defense. Importantly, Prince uses this story as one of the major successes of Blackwater. The entire chapter he spends discussing it spelled out how exactly they were vital to the defense of the compound. He also highlights those successes in ways that also show shortcomings in American military planning, shortcomings that could be made up with by Blackwater after all.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 135-140.

¹⁴⁶Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 149-151.

Scahill, on the other hand, takes several different messages from this same story. In his account it is important many of the major details and players are the same but he does not take the same moral away from the story. Firstly, he points far more blame at the occupational government and Bremer for inciting the violence in the first place. He holds that their moves against the Shi'a forces at work in the city only served to make them more aggressive. Shutting down their cleric's newspaper and leading raids against his followers and more overt actions only bolstered his points, as it appeared to be proving all the things he was saying about the occupation right. All of this was built on an already rocky situation; American forces were gearing up to move on Fallujah for a second time after the city had been lost just days before the current situation began. From the get go Scahill is giving readers a much more tense situation, even harking back to the fact that Blackwater operators had been killed in the opening exchange in Fallujah. In all of this he put far more blame on the occupation efforts, much of which he holds allowed Blackwater to be there in the first place. That seems to be on point as given Bremer's track record at understanding the repercussions of dealing with Iraq's this appears to be another of those mistakes.¹⁴⁷

Scahill is quick to point out that although Blackwater led the defense, American forces did eventually aid in the defense and there are no paper records on how the attack started. The exact death toll is also a complete mystery in this regard. Some sources put it at twenty to thirty of the attackers dead but some of the men on the roof claim it must have been hundreds. Scahill also points out how quickly Blackwater responded to this to the public at home. The Vice President of the company came out to the media, as Prince

¹⁴⁷Scahill, *Blackwater*, 180-185.

at this point rarely spoke to the media, and explained that it had not been a battle. Blackwater did not fight battles; they instead carried out security actions. Such explanations of the blurry line that private contractors occupy became a repetitive feature of their discussions with the public at home. Which of course shows that there were still serious efforts to keep contractors out of the news and out of the public view, and if they had to enter those circles it was done cautiously. Two other major issues come in Scahill's account as well: the effect this defense had on the occupation, and the fact that Blackwater led the defense that day.¹⁴⁸

The first of those had some obvious effects. The pushing off of the mob made matters in Najaf much worse. Many Iraqis who had nothing to do with the attack now remember it as a massacre, according to Scahill. There is some reasoning for this as before the shooting was done there were clerics among the dead in the crowd. The cleric originally in charge of the attack went on to call on his followers for an all-out uprising against the occupation. The entire time saw him growing more and more influential in that unstable period after the fall of Saddam's regime. At least eight cities saw uprisings related to this event, even one of the Shi'a slums of Baghdad. American forces on the ground there had to move in and deal with them, which of course only worsened tensions in the area as forces swept through. These tensions did not improve as Bremer's next move was to declare Muqata Al-Sadr, the cleric behind the attacks and uprisings, an outlaw. That choice only further proved every complaint Al-Sadr made about occupation forces look true. Though, there is the argument at that stage there may be little else to do in the face of someone becoming such a destabilizing presence. Regardless, it unified

¹⁴⁸Scahill, *Blackwater*, 188-195.

opposition to occupation forces for a short time in the aftermath.¹⁴⁹ It is also important to note that many people who look at this from an international law stand point take offense to the fact that Blackwater contractors ordered American troops to fire. Schaihl points this out aggressively, that these people are for all purposes employees of the American government and shouldn't have been giving orders on that rooftop. Certainly, there is something to be said about that argument. It likely should not be these people commanding American troops. Several critics of contracting came out about this issue as well as Najaf. Najaf did get some attention from the media and those critics but was largely over shadowed by the retaking of Fallujah back in the United States.¹⁵⁰

With that said, it also seems important to note that Prince addresses next to none of this in his account of Najaf. He does not even go into the aftermath of the event or try to make any connection that the upheaval in Iraq was connected in anyway. Prince does defend the fact that his men where issuing orders on that rooftop but that is only because Prince was clashing with critics in the military. Several military officials, spearheaded by Lieutenant General Sanchez, criticized the event or claimed it didn't happen as the men on the ground claimed it did. That is Prince's primary focus: lashing out at these people and even people he felt like did not give Blackwater its due credit. Prince's defense becomes a little one-sided to just people who were incorrect in claiming the attack was less severe than his men claimed or not giving them enough credit. Given the sheer scale that Scahill lays out of events that followed this one, it seems lacking to just pass over that. This speaks volumes about the goals of Prince's narrative.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹Scahill, *Blackwater*, 195-196.

¹⁵⁰Scahill, *Blackwater*, 185, 196.

¹⁵¹Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 147-152.

Regardless, Najaf is largely looked at as one of the big successes for Blackwater in Iraq. Often times it is referred to by their defenders for the good they can do. Just like in Prince's telling often times the negatives that go with it are left out or overlooked. Though in continuing the argument that they increased tensions in Iraq, there are many more incidents that come up that are less favorable for them. These incidents range from the obscure sightings only reported on by Iraqi's themselves to well documented losses of life, both of which exist in great numbers and had unfavorable effects on public opinion in Iraq. It came to the point that some of the behaviors of Blackwater itself started to gain the ire of the people they were protecting. Matt Degn, one of these people came to call working with them when trying to work out deals with Iraqi militias said this: "It's like one step forward, eight steps backward." That quote comes despite Degn himself attesting to the fact these people were willing to do whatever it took to keep him safe, though that in itself was part of the problem. ¹⁵²

As evidence of attacks carried out by Blackwater surfaced, many were called rumors but others were found popping up in Iraqi police reports and in complaints of their new established Intelligence Directorate. Iraqi police reports produced evidence of several shootings that occurred involving Blackwater employees firing on Iraqi's that approached them. One of the worst of these incidents was a group of Blackwater snipers gunning down guards for the Iraqi Media Network. Attempts by the Iraqi army to investigate the shooting were met by taunts from the contractors who ended up simply driving away from the scene. Even worse, the shooting was carried out from the roof of the new Justice Ministry of Iraq. The Media Network reported on the shooting and

¹⁵²Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 175-176.

investigated further and said that this had been an attack by Blackwater contractors. Attempts to try and bring about a lawsuit on behalf of the victims ended up defeated once an Iraqi judge simply stated that his hands were bound by, legal authority of Order 17, which still stood.¹⁵³

The constant defeat of Iraqi Justice in these cases is what frustrated the Intelligence Directorate more. The organization had hoped its close ties would lend them credibility in the eyes of the American occupation officials but on matters such as these violent events they were snubbed repeatedly. Attempts to try and gain some justice on these matters were blocked repeatedly as Order 17 was thrown into their faces again and again. It is easy to imagine how frustrating this must be. These are people who were completely willing to work with the United States on this occupation and had in some cases helped to over throw Saddam. It is no stretch to say they were going to be upset when any attempt to carry out justice against people attacking them was stopped. Only making matters worse is that these were contractors with the American occupation, which does not paint a good image. Even more upsetting is that the Directorate was supposedly in charge of the management of the contracting companies within Iraq. It is hard to imagine something more insulting, supposedly being in charge of a group of people who cannot be punished. The restraints placed on these new Iraqi institutions here clearly just show more sources of tension.¹⁵⁴

Furthering this is the fact that those restraints were supposed to be because Americans would deal with any unjust dealing inflicted by contractors. That was the theory at least but in the wake of many of these violent attacks this did not seem to be the

¹⁵³Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 170-173.

¹⁵⁴Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 168-170.

practice. After many of these attacks, attempts by Iraqi agencies to get cooperation out of the American officials on the ground were not easy. Investigations by the State Department often amounted to simply asking the contractors themselves what had occurred. Often they would not even speak to Iraqi's about the event and take the contractors' stories and shut the case. In the case of the Media Network shooting no American official ever returned to the scene to investigate. American handling of any element of these events lent no credence to the mission in Iraq. Some Iraqi officials even reported that events like this certainly only made them more enemies. American officials also responded that these events only gave insurgents more things to exploit for their own gains with the population.¹⁵⁵

More importantly were the attempts by American officials to keep these attacks from the media back home. Iraqi opinions were important to keeping the occupation running smoothly but opinion at home also carried weight. As such it seems there were some efforts made to keep non-Iraqis from reporting on these events. That does appear to have been a success as most major media outlets were silent on this matter until after the most famous of the Blackwater shootings, Nisoor Square. Otherwise they only appear to have popped up in articles concerning their actions at home or just mentions of their existence on the world stage. The media is surprisingly sparse until about 2007 when that scandal broke. Some mentions of what went on are out there but they are not the majority of what would be written on the company. After that it appears that the flood gates could

¹⁵⁵Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 168-175.

no longer be held shut and the greatest bulk of this came to light along with that shooting.¹⁵⁶

The shooting at Nisoor Square served as the tipping point for Blackwater in Iraq as well as one of the most damaging instances of the relation with Iraq. The shooting, often dubbed “Iraq’s Bloody Sunday” resulted when four Blackwater guards opened fire into a traffic circle in Iraq. The guards claimed they were acting to defend the convoy they were a part of but there is little evidence that they were under any amount of fire. The best evidence is that a car bomb went off several blocks away about twenty minutes prior to the shooting. The official American embassy report holds to the Blackwater story that there had in fact been a fire fight and that the shooting that followed was a result of that. What followed was much closer to the wholesale slaughter of 14 Iraqis. Of course the Iraqi people, and the newly built Iraqi government, met this with an instant outcry. This caused the newly formed government to start trying to push for ways to finally bring justice against these contractors.¹⁵⁷

Scahill is quick to point out that this was certainly no easy road for the Iraqi government as until American and other outside media sources started picking up on the story it was resisted. There were attempts to keep the story out of the media, some even both those within the Iraqi government who were hoping it would just die down. Largely, the main attempt being to handle it as the previous attacks had been handled: publishing the Blackwater story as the official telling for the American embassy. The story proved to be too much to keep hidden though, and Iraqi reporting proved to be far too aggressive for even Western media to not notice. He also holds it was not just the media that saw

¹⁵⁶“Profile: Blackwater Worldwide,” *BBC News*, August 20th 2009.

¹⁵⁷Hugh Sykes, “Iraqis angry over Blackwater Shooting,” *BBC News*, September 19, 2007.

attempts to keep some of these events from the public. He posits that some within the government went so far as to order Blackwater to not open any details on its contract until after the oversight hearing on Capitol Hill that resulted from this event. Once again the momentum behind Nisoor seemed to be too much to keep under wraps. Eventually the story broke despite clear attempts to reign it in.¹⁵⁸

The Western media exploded because of this attack. While there had been minor mentions of Blackwater and contractors prior to Nisoor, it did not compare. In the wake of the scandal surfacing several news media outlets came out in full opposition to the attacks but the fact Blackwater existed at all. It seems much of that veiled and subtle language that Rumsfeld and Cheney used in their promotion of contracting had been necessary. Once Blackwater was out in the open and the media made aware of their practices in Iraq pressure built for something to be done about it. That pressure is largely what would cause all the following events, the push to put the contractors, who carried the attack out on trial, Blackwater losing its contracts, all of it. The attempts to keep contractors out of the media makes perfect sense when seeing exactly what happens when they did get in the news. While it took some time for the offenders to see jail time the media and public backlash did the damage that would bring an end to Blackwater's height. Public opinion and the attacks by the media even brought the company down despite a renewed contract as will be shown.¹⁵⁹

Prince for his answer to this incident largely tries to follow the official report given by his men, that this was a chaotic attack on the convoy they were leading.

¹⁵⁸Scahill, *Blackwater*, 12-17.

¹⁵⁹Jay Price, "N.C.-Based Blackwater will Exit Iraq" *The Charlotte Observer*, Jan 30, 2009, "Blackwater Iraq Contract Renewed" *BBC News*, April 5, 2008.

Compared to the other accounts surrounding the event it does not hold up well. The tale of one car after another speeding toward the convoy does not hold up when it is made clear that Iraqi civilians were driving those cars. It stands out that Prince also chose to spend a great deal describing rules of engagement, spelling out the chain of events a Blackwater operator would have to go through before firing, directly after telling his version of Nisoor. The attempt to showcase this event as completely legal becomes apparent but nonetheless it does not hold up well in the face of opposition when compared to the other accounts. There is also barely any attempt to make any sort of reference to the victims, only a few mentioned by name even in Prince's telling.¹⁶⁰

The claims of this story are also the primary defense given by Prince and Blackwater personnel to Congress. The Committee on Oversight that was produced in the aftermath of Nisoor saw Prince completely retell this story. Prince began actively using it as the public defense, that his men had in fact done nothing wrong. The Committee questioned Prince strongly on both Nisoor and other violent occurrences. Prince attempted to use the same defense each time, that Blackwater had done no wrong. To many members on the Committee though, it soon became clear that defense was not enough. Several of them openly questioned the value of the services being provided by Blackwater and companies like it. Many seemed convinced that employing these private companies had done more harm to their mission in Iraq than good. While many Iraqis did not feel that way, it seems to be some consolation that the tide was turning in the

¹⁶⁰Prince, *Civilian Warriors*, 210-212.

government itself.¹⁶¹ It is important to note that not all support had failed as House republicans moved to try and adjourn the session early the day of the committee to keep it from happening.¹⁶²

Regardless of the claims made by Blackwater about its people being on the right side of the law, events turned against them. As the investigation set into motion Blackwater's convoys were put on halt in Iraq. They had become so tangled into American political dealings in the country that halt put all political movement out of the Green Zone on standby. The outcry against the company proved to grant some political power to the Iraqi government on the matter this time. The pressure the backlash from the shooting caused allowed them to levy enough pressure to get some control over the contractors in the company. Finally, they would be allowed to decide which companies could do business inside of the Iraq border. Once this power was handed over Blackwater was of course banned from operating inside the borders of Iraq and as such lost their American contract to the rival company Triple Canopy. Importantly, this not only removed Blackwater but also put an end to Order 17.¹⁶³

Certainly, the American government backing down on that order was an attempt to create some good will with the Iraqi government. It is safe to say that many in the Iraqi government likely viewed defeated Order 17 as a major victory. After all, this was a problem that had been causing uproar among the Iraqi population since the occupation started. Now that Iraq had some power over the contractors, who could operate within her

¹⁶¹United States, Blackwater USA hearing before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, first session, October 2, 2007. Washington: U.S. G.P.O. <http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS108535>, 1-9.

¹⁶²Scahill, *Blackwater*, 1-2.

¹⁶³"Iraq to end contractor immunity" *BBC News*, October 30, 2007.

borders, was a step in the right direction but there is evidence the damage to American-Iraqi relations was done. The slow movement on the part of the American officials in the country in dealing with the events of Nisoor Square was not taken well by Iraqi officials. The events following the shooting were not pleasing to the government of Iraq as well. The attempts to secure justice were blocked as the contractors were moved out of the country. American officials adopted the story supported by the contractors without talking to any of the Iraqi witnesses. Even more upsetting to Iraqis was, in the wake of this shooting, Blackwater's contracts with the American government were initially renewed before being cancelled. That renewal was followed by several positive comments coming from American officials as well. While the shooting was not followed by uprisings like Najaf, it turned tensions up and strained relations between the two countries. Most of this is certainly insulting to a government to say the least.¹⁶⁴

Those tensions were not lifted when the American government attempted to curb those tensions. Attempts were made to bring these men to trial in the United States back at home. While not the best answer it may have been the simplest and best way to show some sort of solidarity. The problem was that the first attempt to bring this trial to court was thrown out by an American judge. That result for the first attempt at a trial only worsened the tensions surrounding Nisoor. The evidence, according to the judge, was inadmissible under the circumstances. That statement was made despite Iraqi eye-witnesses and a member of the Blackwater team being willing to testify against his

¹⁶⁴"Blackwater Iraq Contract Renewed"

colleagues. Even as the United States government tried to repair the damage done, the outcome in fact made things worse once again.¹⁶⁵

The Iraqi government did show its displeasure with that event quite clearly though. While attempts to appeal the decision to throw out the case were in order, Iraq moved to throw out all remaining members of Blackwater. While the company had been banned from operating it had changed names and many of its former employees had remained in the country either working for different companies or staying on through Blackwater's rebranding attempt after Nisoor Square had turned against them. Iraq wanted these people gone and as such had 250 current and former members of the company expelled from her borders. Obviously, the Iraqi government was in no mood to sit around and wait for the American legal machine to work out the appeals against the men who committed the shootings at Nisoor. Despite promises from Vice President Joe Biden that something would be done, clearly that was not enough. Then again punishing a handful of men from a company that had done so much wrong does come off weak. Still, the American government and not any legal organization was pushing for this case to be taken back to trial, likely to save relations with Iraq as Anti-American sentiment remained high in the wake of this scandal.¹⁶⁶

As those relations remained strained, public opinion at home shifted more and more against these contractors. Bills appeared in both the house and the Senate that called for the elimination of contractors from the use of American military planning. This echoes back to some of the comments in the committee on oversight as the idea of private contracting was openly questioned. These movements gathered against Blackwater,

¹⁶⁵"US Judge Dismisses Charges Against Blackwater Iraq Killings" *BBC News*, December 31, 2009.

¹⁶⁶"Iraq expels Blackwater Security employees" *BBC News*, February 10, 2010.

picking up speed as other events came to light, such as the fact the company had been investigated for illegally transporting weapons across international borders. Members of Blackwater faced charges for that on more than one occasion. Many of the other shootings that were only now being revealed were mentioned in these bills that were aiming to entirely dismantle the empires built by these companies. Support for them was clearly draining in the face of this scandal as many in the government saw these contractors as unworthy of the billions they had received in funding.¹⁶⁷

That eroding support was met with more pressure to produce a second trial, coming from both within the American government and within Iraq itself. Several Iraqi officials openly called for a new trial to be put together. Their demands were not that these people were not tried in Iraq, but more a demand that they face justice at all. They even openly claimed they would do whatever they could to see these men prosecuted for their actions. Some showed absolute defeat with American justice as they saw these people defended yet again in the face of what in the minds of most Iraqis was overwhelming evidence. To many of them the evidence levied against these men would have been enough to get Iraqis arrested by American occupation forces. As the battle for the second trial went on Iraqi anger and discontent once again became an issue. American military officials worried that the acquittal could mean more uprisings across the country. While that did not happen, Iraqi discontent with American justice and operations was clear.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷Bernard Sanders, 2011 "Stop outsourcing security Act," <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-bill/2398>.

¹⁶⁸"Iraq 'regrets' US decision to clear Blackwater guards," *BBC News*, January 1, 2010.

As mentioned previously, Joe Biden came out against the decision of the judge that ended the first trial. While it was not enough to repair relations, it proved that the Obama administration was looking at this as a major issue. Certainly, the administration was more than willing to commit resources to this issue as they moved to start the appeal process themselves. There were clearly elements attempting to smooth over relations in this move. The objective of trying to get this appeal going was to prove that the American government could and would punish anyone who had done wrong to the Iraqi people. Given that the Iraqi people had the exact opposite proved true to them more than once, proving that justice would be carried out was now of vital importance in trying to keep those relations in order. It proved one way or another that the administration was going to pursue the trial to improve relations with Iraq. That commitment would prove to be important, as it was a long task to get the second trial in motion after the appeal was successful.¹⁶⁹

After a great deal of struggle the appeal was finally put together and the second trial was finally put back on track. It had taken a great deal of effort by the American government itself to put this trial in motion and clearly some compromises were made. One of the contractors was completely cleared of the second trial; the charges dropped against him were never brought back up. The man who had been willing to make a plea deal remained in cooperation with the prosecution. It is also important to note that three of the men were being charged with manslaughter while one was being charged with first degree murder, as he had fired the first shot. Importantly, the trial was being treated as a self-defense case, the contractors and their lawyers having to prove that there had been

¹⁶⁹"Biden Vows the Us will appeal in Iraq Blackwater case," *BBC News*, January 23, 2010.

cause for lethal force. The prosecution made itself known that they were there to prove once and for all that these contractors were not above the law. This was likely an outreach to the watching Iraqi people and government, as the American government even went to the effort of having the surviving victims of Nisoor and the families of those killed transported to the trial.¹⁷⁰

It seemed like the trial was turned into an important foreign policy event for the American government. If these men walked again, or worse yet the case was thrown out again, it could destroy Iraqi faith in the American system. As such the prosecution clearly took this case as a dire matter. They did not make some of the earlier mistakes made when the shooting first broke into American circles. They actively used the eye witness accounts of the attacks and combined that with aerial photos of the area and pictures of the crime scene to make for a strong case. The defense for their part did a great deal to try and get the second trial thrown out, though their attempts to do so this time were far less successful. The compromise of leaving the fifth shooter out of the trial had weakened that point. That would not stop them from making jabs where they could in attempting to derail the proceedings. They went to such lengths that would often see them accusing the government of having evidence left out of the trial. The biggest of these claims was the rage over a single picture of eight empty bullet casings being left out. The defense claimed it was evidence of incoming fire.¹⁷¹

Ultimately, these attempts by the defense did not derail that trial as they thought they would. The prosecution proved to just have too weighty of a case built against the men on trial and certainly physical evidence was in no short supply, and the same could

¹⁷⁰Pete Yotes, "7 years later Blackwater guards go on trial," *The Post and Courier*, Jun 9, 2014.

¹⁷¹Pete Yotes, "Defense : Gov't suppressed evidence in Blackwater" *Charlotte Observer*, Jul, 28 2014.

be said of witnesses. As it became clear that a guilty verdict would be coming down in the face of such evidence the battle became over sentencing. The defense tried to find various ways to prove that these men did not deserve anything lengthy and perhaps the minimum sentencing should be waived. It was clear from the outset that was not going to be an option. Anything less than the minimum would be insulting to the Iraqis and with good reason, as they were still watching this trial closely. The prosecution did demand however, much longer than the minimum sentences as the manslaughter and firearm charges these men were facing both carried a thirty-year minimum. In the end the Judge opted to avoid both routes and did opt for the minimum sentencing on all charges.¹⁷² That is despite efforts by the defense to try and derail the sentencing.

Their attempts to delay were promptly shut down by the judge on all fronts though, despite claims by the defense that the entire trial should have been thrown out. The law that allowed these men to be prosecuted in the States only applied to Department of Defense contractors, not State Department men like these were. Those attempts along with several others trying to use legal loopholes to slow down sentencing were all equally silenced. It was clear the Justice Department was not going to allow another round of the first trial to happen as that could lead to another mess on their hands. That said he would hear nothing of delaying the sentencing though, the judge among a great many other people was ready to end the trial. Any other attempt to try and change the result of the trial would have to be done through appeals. The judge held most of the matters the defense had brought up could be handled more smoothly in appeals anyway. The prosecution, which was led by United States Justice Department attorneys, made it

¹⁷²Eric Tucker, "Former Guards to get lengthy prison sentences for Iraq shootings," *Charlotte Observer*, April 12, 2015.

apparent that they thought a much longer sentence was called for but would defer to the judgment of the court.¹⁷³

The prosecution being state employed certainly sends the message that the government truly intended to break the concept that these men were above the law. This lined up with goals clearly laid out by the administration when they laid out the desire to pursue an appeal through Joe Biden. Following through with the conviction must have been an important step in regaining some good will with Iraq. They were certainly not upset with the result as the men finally received some sort of punishment, something the Iraqis had been demanding for years and even before Nisoor happened. The carrying out of this case also did something even more important, something the defense had more than likely been trying to prevent. The successful case against these contractors saw to it that precedence was set. These people could now be taken home and charged for the crimes that they committed even in the so called “fog of war” which could be an upsetting thing for those contractors still abroad. The victory here was certainly no small matter for the people of Iraq or for the future of American military efforts. After all, if these men are going to continue playing a role in American objectives abroad, something must keep them in check.¹⁷⁴

The fact this was at an end was likely an important step for many Iraqis, who had been so upset with events at Nisoor they refused monetary compensation. The ill will left behind by this event saw Iraqis call for these men’s deaths as punishment for their crimes, though importantly they were calling for a death sentence not a murder. Still, for a long time a lot of these issues went unaddressed as Iraqis had high hopes the first time these

¹⁷³Tucker, “Former Guards to get lengthy prison sentences for Iraq shootings.”

¹⁷⁴Tucker, “Former Guards to get lengthy prison sentences for Iraq shootings.”

men were brought up on charges. The cries for something to be done about what had become a rampant problem in the occupation had finally been answered. To many this was not just the justice for Nisoor Square, some Iraqis saw this as the United States finally admitting its people were not the masters of Iraq. This was a concern that many had felt in the wake of these acts of violence, as it seemed that these men could treat Iraqis as they pleased. In many ways, the successful conviction of these men provided answers and solace to those less than ideal questions. This showed, in part at least, that America could and would act as Iraqi's ally and not its master. Though it is impossible to tell if the full extent of the damage that was done can be healed, simply by putting these men away, it is a step in the right direction. In action and practice, it seems to no longer be the course that the United States will take on these matters for the time being.¹⁷⁵

It is important to point out though that security contractors are far from a thing of the past currently. Not even Blackwater vanished in its entirety. After all Iraq, had expelled the remaining former employees of the company long after the fallout of Nisoor Square had ended their contract. Those bans and removals survived the company's several name changes in the wake of their failing reputation.¹⁷⁶ The company changed names and hands several times with the security division now going by the name Paravant. That company continued to operate in Afghanistan and other American interests in the Middle East. The ban by the Iraqi government saw to the fact that they would not be welcome again, that move to banish them from the country proved effective. Certainly, when the American government was willing to back it up. Interestingly, these former Blackwater employees remain an issue abroad as they cause incidents in Afghanistan as

¹⁷⁵Humphrey Hawksley, "Bitterness at Blackwater shootings," *BBC News*, December 8, 2008.

¹⁷⁶ "Iraq expels Blackwater Security employees"

well. Some of these incidents mirror those in Iraq but also saw contractors injuring each other with firearms while drunk. Importantly, in looking at these events again the American government is much sterner with its condemnations against such behavior. It sustains that these men should behave as the government employees that they are and not cause such trouble.¹⁷⁷

Not just this but now the American government was admitting to fault in the actions that these men took. The second committee on oversight that focused on Paravant came to discuss how failures of oversight had led to these situations. They concluded that their policy to not give these men much oversight had led to such actions becoming common in the Middle East. Clearly, that stance taken shows some effort of the American government to try and make changes on this issue. After so long of ignoring it they were willing to take steps to keep this from becoming a major issue once again. Admitting fault is also important as it shows that willingness to make changes to a system that had gotten no attention for years. The fact it was before the completion of the second trial also shows that commitment. Certainly, this would be the time to making that commitment as the period before the second trial was when some of the worst relations between America and Iraq were ongoing, the expulsion of those remaining Blackwater employees having happened only weeks prior to this committee on oversight.¹⁷⁸

Whatever the effect the ongoing use of private contracting will have is hard to say at this point. It will most likely remain important and a factor to America's relations with other nations anywhere American military assets are deployed. These companies have

¹⁷⁷United States, *Contracting in a Counter Insurgency: An Examination of the Blackwater-Paravant Contract and the Need for Oversight*, Feb 24, 2010, 1-5.

¹⁷⁸United States, *Contracting in a Counter Insurgency: An Examination of the Blackwater-Paravant Contract and the Need for Oversight*, 6-7.

only barely declined from what they were at the height of the system. When Blackwater was removed from its contract after Nisoor Square it was instantly replaced by another company. The world environment also holds a slew of opportunities for private security. Both the Middle East and hotspots across the world are an open invitation, as the American military cannot handle every single issue on the face of the Earth. The flaws of this system aside, it will find a demand to supply as private individuals in war have always done, though the attempts to alter the current state of affairs after the fall out with Iraq may see these people become far less vital to American missions than they once were and currently are. Many in the government still call for them to phased out when possible.¹⁷⁹

While the United States has proven willing to make changes to how these private contractors are dealt with and the guidelines they are given in the field, there has certainly been damage done. The mission in Iraq suffered a great deal as these private contractors were the sources of some of the greatest tensions of the occupation. Such tensions plagued both the early parts of the occupation as well as the period when American withdrawal was being discussed. Their actions and American response to them led to Iraqis feeling that they were worth nothing to the Americans and those Iraqis in power feeling that they might never regain sovereignty. The American government after 2008 put great efforts into disproving both of those, and there was some success in those efforts. Whether Iraq and its people will ever forgive these actions or early American reaction to them remains an unknown.

¹⁷⁹Scahill, *Blackwater*, 250.

It is also important to note that the story is still unfolding as well. Blackwater may have collapsed and weakened the use of contractors as no company has grown to fill that previous role that Blackwater once filled. Despite that, many of the actors that took part are still active. Prince has been trying to reassert some political clout after the most recent election cycle and according to some media reports might have done so successfully.¹⁸⁰ As well the events surrounding Blackwater and its rise are still so recent there may be major changes in what is currently thought. There is some discussion that the Trump administration may seek to overturn the convictions of the Nisoor square shooters. As the story continues to develop there will be more to write about it and it should not be forgotten as new evidence continues to surface. It seems that this story is going to be one that was not to vanish along with the media moving on after the convictions of the Nisoor shooters. With the major players, still active and parts of the story still developing, it is hard to say where the story of contracting and the United States policy with them may end up and it is likely to continue to off a wealth of information for those willing to study it.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Adam Entous, Greg Miller, Kevin Sieff, and Karen Deyoung, "Blackwater Founder Held Secret Meeting to Establish Trump-Putin Back channel," *Washington Post*, April 3, 2017.

¹⁸¹ Keri Geiger and Michael Riley, "Blackwater founder Erik Prince said to have advised Trump team," *Bloomberg News*, April 18, 2017

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