



Damien Van Puyvelde. *Outsourcing US Intelligence: Contractors and Government Accountability.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019. 269 pp. \$110.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4744-5022-5.

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When it comes to outsourcing and privatization of government security services, there are two realms held inviolate in the mind of most US policymakers: the use of force and spying. While the literature on the privatization of the military is quite mature, the same cannot be said of its intel brethren.[1] Much in the same way that many are uneasy about the notion of private military contractors, so too would some be concerned about intel contracting, though not entirely for the same reasons. Both trends fall under the concept of the privatization of security.[2] However, the maturity of the work that studies the issues associated with outsourcing intelligence is far less developed.

On the one hand, the notion of warfighters run amuck, profiteering off of the taking of lives and the domination of territory is repulsive to modern Western models of the good state. It offends the sense of who should be permitted to kill, it stretches and stresses the legal system established to ensure a separate and higher standard of behavior for those endowed by the state to exercise that government function, and it potentially endangers the sisters and brothers in the services who undertake the oath to defend the nation. The maturity and breadth of the academic literature on the privatization of military force is well established by journal article-length pieces written by Deborah Avant, Anna Leander, and James Cock-

ayne.[3] Additionally, the edited volume by Simon Chesterman and Chia Lehnardt, *From Mercenaries to Market: The Rise and Regulation of Private Military Companies* (2007) is a tremendously well-thought-out source.

The intel community differs slightly. Its activities are far less transparent; its history of development is known largely to itself as there are few public histories and no national holidays or memories commemorating the victories of the intel community. While it seems apparent that we should be concerned about the privatization of the use of force, it is altogether unclear what the issues might be for intel. There is some early work done by academics and investigative journalists on some of those potential issues, including Simon Chesterman's work as well as Tim Shorrock's book.[4] It is into this particularly shadowy gap in the literature that Damien Van Puyvelde attempts to shed light. The core issue for Van Puyvelde is not the outsourcing itself but building the appropriate government oversight to ensure that contractors are held accountable. In this sense, Van Puyvelde's book attempts to set straight any misconceptions about intelligence accountability and how the public should feel about outsourcing this very sensitive function.

The book's first case study chapter is a service for the reader. The book begins at the very birth of the US intel community and reveals that, in fact, intelligence collection—in all its forms—begins as a private, for-hire affair. For that revelation alone, the author's opening is worth reading. As Van Puyvelde documents, the emergent US intelligence community was private, for hire, and generally untrusted by a nascent government convinced that the growth of such agencies was likely to impinge upon the freedom of its own people. The massive expansion of US intelligence agencies and activities throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century presented lawmakers with challenges to accountability in contract enforcement and the poaching of government talent into the private sector. Contemporary pressures for the technical community that supports intelligence collection mean that a contractor can make far more than their government-employed colleagues. All of these issues and more are covered in the subsequent chapters.

The book's strengths are in its willingness to sort through the utter minutiae of both existing and failed legislation. For this, Van Puyvelde should be lauded for doing truly onerous labor. Van Puyvelde painstakingly demonstrates that Congress is not only sensitive to concerns about intelligence outsourcing, but that there are numerous examples of legislation, passed and failed, that reveal a continual evolution of the relationship between contractors and the government. Van Puyvelde makes clear that while the relationship is not perfect, it is far from out of the norm and is increasingly regulated in the state's interests.

The book's scope is broad as it is a first step into uncharted territory. Its weaknesses, then, are the result of the bold step rather than the author's scholarship or shortcomings in approach. The breadth of the piece, often unfortunately, opens the reader to interesting routes of investigation but cannot address many of those questions deeply. Van Puyvelde does address the creation of

the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) as an oversight mechanism for assessing intelligence contracting that holds the private sector accountable. The reader is left with some small solace that ODNI is getting better accounting for the sheer scope of private-sector intelligence contractors, but that accountability does not mean that US intelligence employment is appropriately sized, tasked, or responsible with its mandate. The reader is often left wondering whether the massive size of the intelligence community suggests its own unsustainability. Whether it is accountable or not, the expansion of the intelligence community and its outsourcing raises the question, how much is enough? Van Puyvelde is clear that such elements are beyond the scope of his thesis, leaving significant room for more scholarship on the topic.

Ultimately what Van Puyvelde manages to do is to write broadly into an academic lacuna that links intelligence outsourcing with accountability. Van Puyvelde's book works most effectively as a primer for graduate students seeking an introduction to intelligence and a nuanced counterargument against bombastic claims about intelligence out of control through the private marketplace.

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Notes

[1]. Alan Axelrod, *Mercenaries: A Guide to Private Armies and Private Military Companies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2013); Deborah D. Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Bruce E. Stanley, *Outsourcing Security: Private Military Contractors and US Foreign Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

[2]. Deborah D. Avant, "The Privatization of Security and Change in the Control of Force," *International Studies Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (2004): 153-57.

[3]. Deborah D. Avant, "From Mercenary to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War," *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000): 41-72; Anna Leander, "The Power to Construct International Security: On the Significance of Private Military Companies," *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005), and "The Market for Force and Public Security: The Destabilizing Consequences of Private Military Companies," *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 5 (2005): 605-22; James Cockayne, "Regulating Private Military and Security Companies: The Content, Negotiation, Weaknesses and Promise of the Montreux Document," *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 13, no. 3 (2008): 401-28.

[4]. Tim Shorrock, *Spies for Hire: The Secret World of Intelligence Outsourcing* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008); Simon Chesterman, "We Can't Spy ... If We Can't Buy!": The Privatization of Intelligence and the Limits of Outsourcing 'Inherently Governmental Functions,'" *European Journal of International Law* 19, no. 5 (2008): 1055-74.

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