



Marque and Reprisal: The Spheres of Public and Private War by Kenneth B. Moss.

Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2019. Pp. xii, 452. ISBN 978-0-7006-2775-2.

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In *Marque and Reprisal*, military historian Kenneth Moss¹ traces the evolution of financially remunerated private violence, specifically with regard to nation states' employment of privateers, mercenaries, and charter companies. He begins by defining what war is, who can participate in it, and to what ends. He then considers how private warfare manifested itself both in the European context and vis-à-vis the political and military development of the American colonies through to their union and independence. There follows a discussion of the growing dominance of the state over private, non-state actors during the nineteenth century. The last part of the book concerns the privatization experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq and the emergence of effective cyberwarfare as a real threat to contemporary notions of the management and control of violence.

As compared with earlier studies of its subject,² Moss's goes beyond the realm of international relations to include insights from studies of international law, US constitutional scholarship, military and political history, and philosophy. His concentration on privateering clarifies the "the similarity of its business arrangements to modern contracting" (6). Moss unapologetically uses international examples chiefly to better explain the American experience. Properly so, since the United States is, he maintains, a "trendsetter" (16) regarding privatization ventures that other states are likely to follow.

A particular strength of Moss's study is its account of the implications of privateering for US statehood and statecraft prior to 1800. On the one hand, a fledgling central government had to unify its separate political units while developing sufficient military capacity to counter hostile acts by Britain, France, and any other states wishing to upset the American political experiment. On the other hand, US leaders had to demonstrate internationally that they were responsible actors cognizant of the evolving norms regarding reliance on and control of privateers. By 1800, the United States

believed it had organized itself and its laws in ways that would win respect and equal treatment among the community of nations.... It had created laws, processes, and instruments that placed the use of private violence and war under government and state control. Private actors and practitioners might well remain, but law now required them to act within the boundaries set forth in the Constitution and by subsequent law. Building upon the legacies of European states and obviously Britain's in particular, the United States had accomplished significant measures in a span of twenty-five years. (205)

1. Moss is professor emeritus, National Defense Univ., where he was on the faculty of the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy.

2. E.g., Janice Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Univ. Pr, 1994), and Sarah Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2007).

Despite its emphasis on privateering, the book almost entirely omits the recent example of twenty-first-century Somali piracy and the use of private military and security companies to quell it. For almost a decade, these companies provided armed guards for commercial ships or even armed escort vessels. These maritime activities sometimes involved US-flagged commercial ships—a subject that cries out for attention in this volume.

Though the book's eclectic approach would seem to be attractive to a wide audience, this is not a work for a reader unfamiliar with military and security privatization, for two related reasons. First, its organization is at times lackadaisical. *Marque and Reprisal's* introduction is not sufficiently direct, the chapter introductions could similarly be more clear, and the chapters' contents often wander as a result. Second, the book's paragraphing style is a complicating factor. Substantial paragraphs with multiple themes predominate. Not knowing where the paragraph is going, let alone where the chapter is going, is quite frustrating. A reader familiar with the topic should persevere in order to gather the book's aforementioned rich nuggets. Unfortunately, the book's insufficient editing means that a reader without this experience may well give up.