

III. REVIEWS

„*Ante Portas – Security Studies*”
2020, No 1(14)
DOI: 10.33674/3201912

Przemysław FURGACZ
Poland

WOJCIECH PAŁKA, *KAPITALIZM, NOWE WOJNY I PRYWATNE FIRMY* [Capitalism, New Wars and Private Companies], WARSAW 219, PP. 224

Thucydides accurately observed that there are three principal causes of commencing and waging wars. According to him these causes were fear, honour and interest. Since immemorial times, wars used to give a multitude of opportunities to trouse thanks to grabbed spoils, enslaved captives and conquered land. As a matter of fact, to this very day Thucydides' remark remains in good standing.

Overall, the author shares with the readers his personal reflections o wars' evolution over the ages as well as shifting role and range of mercenaries employment in military action. Just at the beginning it must be stated that the book is truly interesting. The author assumed an interdisciplinary approach and reached for sources from different areas of science: state and law studies, security studies, economic studies, political science and international relations. In the course of his dilatation Wojciech Pałka refers to classical cogitators and theoreticians of war (Carl von Clausewitz), diplomacy (Henry Kissinger), history of empires researchers (Paul Kennedy) and the less known contemporary scholars and experts (Ian Morris, Rupert Smith, etc.). The author drafts the evolution, metamorphoses and transformations of military science, capitalism and imperialism. You have to hand it to him that he does it well, skilfully selecting these thing which indeed are salient in explored problematic and what should be necessarily accentuated. Concurrently, the book having 224 pages is not a weighty volume, but rather a succinct and concise summary all what is the most relevant in the raised field. The author succeeded in finding the golden mean between the opposing poles of too large volume and sinking in the sea of details, on the one hand, and too cursory, perfunctory and banal treatment of the subject-matter, on the other hand. The next unquestionable merit of the book is its versatility and accessibility for the broad masses of readers. The book is earmarked for both experts and laymen. Enthusiasts of

economics, military science, political science, history and international relations – they all will find in Pałka's book many interesting chapters, reflections and information. All of these thanks to the fact that the author has a flow. He writes in clear, understandable, transparent manner and – in addition – gripping and unordinary as well.

The considerable advantage of the book is a substantial number of various diagrams and figures (which are, unfortunately, exclusively black-and-white). The author is relatively objective too. He is not an eulogist of private military companies – he notices threats associated with their existence and expansion. He alleges case of crimes and scandals concerning with private military contractors. He analyzes this phenomenon from the standpoint of different entities and levels of authority: corporations, governments, societies, armed forces, developed and underdeveloped states, democracies and dictatorships. He can perceive bright side of their activity and the spheres in which they work out better than other entities.

In spite of generally good impression, the book is not perfect. One may hint several chief weaknesses. Firstly, sometimes the author unnecessarily repeats himself. Secondly, according to the reviewer, the author dedicated to less attention to the issue of creation, control and use of private military companies by secret services of various countries. This aspect of the issue could definitely be discussed more extensively. Thirdly, the author unduly concentrated on discussion of cases of private military companies exploitation in the service of Western corporations and governments, with a very little focus on description of cases of private military companies employment by Russia and China. As regards the former, there is no lack of sources for exploration of this problem. The notable Wagner Group founded by Evgeny Prigozhyn and his principals has become no less known and no less active than the Academi (formerly known consecutively as Blackwater USA, Blackwater Worldwide and Xe Services). From the point of view of Polish reader description of the history of creation and exploitation by our largest and most threatening neighbour the Wagner Group in Ukraine, Syria, the Central African Republic and Libya would be enormously noteworthy. Fourthly, the author in one passage prevaricates. Namely, at page 177 he highlights how important is for the U.S. economy access to foreign oil. He even writes: "Until the technological change enabling resignation from oil imports does not materialize, the U.S. has no alternative than effectively diversify foreign supply sources." The point is in the last decade such a technological revolution occurred indeed, which belies the aforementioned thesis put forward by the author. The U.S. does not need diversification of crude imports anymore. Actually, crude imports to the U.S. has constantly decreased since 2006. This trend will be continued because of rising exploitation of domestic shale oil deposits. This entails quintessential changes – the Persian Gulf and the Middle East cease to be so material to the U.S. national security as it used to be in the past, which was reflected in Donald Trump electoral promises as well as strategic documents, certain foreign policy

moves of his administration and the Pentagon's postulates. It seems that the tendency to withdraw U.S. soldiers from the Middle East took root in U.S. plans for good.

To recapitulate, *Capitalism, New Wars and Private Companies* is a valuable and useful book, which is worth of reading and which may unselfconsciously be recommended to all the people who want to deepen their knowledge about contemporary military mercenaries, military science history, evolution of capitalism and related issues.