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Re-Configuring Security Practices: The Power of the Private Security Business

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Re-Configuring Security Practices: The Power of the Private Security Business

Since the end of the Cold War the private security has become a lucrative, fast growing business (Singer, 2003).¹ At the outset, this passed largely unnoticed. This is no longer the case. The beheading of Blackwater employees in Fallujah, the participation of CACI and Titan in the Abu Ghraib interrogations and the close relations between vice president Dick Cheney and “the industry” are just some of the reasons the industry has made it into the media and hence into public debate. Many companies are now household names. The private security industry is literally fashionable as Paris stores now carry Blackwater gear (West, 2006). There is nonetheless a striking contrast between the seeming omni-presence of the security business in public debate and the judgements made about its influence and hence power. As the editor of this special issue puts it, the question is how numbers translate into power (Fuchs, in this issue). Among specialists of International Relations (IR), the consensus has been that numbers do not translate into power – at least when we talk about the private security business. The private security business is just providing services to states (e.g. Shearer, 1998). The authority to decide where, how and by whom these services can be used rests with states. Because the use of force is pivotal for the way many IR scholars think of their field, the absence of private authority over the use of force becomes an indication of the limited significance of private power more generally. Business power in security and by inference in international politics in general is in other words *not* important. It is all numbers and no power.

This article takes issue with this position. It does not contest the claim that the monopoly over the legitimate use of force continues to rest with states. Instead it argues that the “power” of the private security business resides in altering what is actually done in security as well as the way it is done; the power of the private security business resides in its refashioning of security practices.² This impact eludes those who identify power with the capacity to get someone to do something they would not otherwise have done. Firms may not be able to persuade states (or

¹ Much ink has been used delimiting the private security business from the private military business. In this paper, the term private security business is used to refer to firms who are directly involved in the use of force abroad. I do not refer to Private Military Companies because the bulk of the firms themselves (after marketing the term) have now abandoned it because of the lack of legitimacy of private *military* activities in international politics. They have therefore reverted to terming themselves private security companies. For further discussions about definitional issues see e.g. Isenberg (2004: p. 15), Singer (2003: Chaps 1-4).

² The theoretical reference literature signaled by the reference to practices is the literature on “practices” both from a Foucauldian and from a Bourdieu inspired perspectives (Larner and Walters, 2004 and Wacquant, 2005).

anyone else) to change their security policies. The power of the private security business is to alter what people, organizations and states *do*, without being bullied into doing it, i.e. how they deal with security on their own initiative. This is an impersonal, diffuse and generalised form of power. It systematically advantages some private security firms as well as private security providers as a group.³ However, this article is less concerned with the effects the changing security practices have than with the changes themselves. Exploring the reconfiguration of security practices is not only logically prior to asking questions about how changing security practices affect the relative strength of firms and states. It is also an attempt to capture shifts in the overall shape of the forest rather than at the fate of individual trees. The argument in this article is that the private security business is refashioning the “forest” through its impact on security practices. This would seem an incontestably important form of power.

Specifically the article argues that the exponential growth of the security business has led to a technocratization and depoliticization of security practices including the practices of states. In order to trace this transformation, the article relies on the self-understanding of the private security business, that is on the image firm representatives and lobby organizations present of their activities. The article attributes the reconfiguration of security practices to the fact that the business mostly does what it constantly says it does – namely provide market based security services, keep out of politics and work with states and not against them. This may sound rather too obvious. But paradoxically it is not. Those interested in private security business power tend to assume that the business’ self-representation is intended to deceive and mask power. They therefore neglect what is (at least if the argument in this article is right) the most direct way of grasping the private business power in the security sector.

2. Efficient Experts and Techno-Managerial Security Practices

The private security business is like any other private businesses at least if we are to believe managers of the sector or assorted lobby groups such as the Business Executives for National Security (BENS), the International Peace Operations Association (IPOA), or the British Security Industry Association (BSIA).⁴ Security firms they insist compete with each other for contracts by trying to offer the best product/service at the most attractive price. To do this, they need to attract competent staff. Moreover, as in any other business, firms specialize in specific market segments and bolster their operations by vertical (into corporate hierarchies) and horizontal (between markets) market integration strategies. Third, as in any other market, firms engage in marketing, branding and advertising as well as in lobbying aimed at reshaping the regulatory environment. Finally, as in other economic sectors, the state and state sponsored regulation plays a central role. This does not imply that there is no market. Moreover, as in other markets some firms and individuals break the norms and laws of regulation which obviously does not mean that laws/norms are absent. The private security business on its own account is, to be clear, a private business sector. The sector has its own admitted idiosyncrasies but logically and morally it does not fundamentally differ from many other private business sectors. This image will not be contested here (although it could be). Instead, the question is what this “normal” business behaviour

³ A comparison of the gains and losses is provided in Leander (2006).

⁴ The organizations have websites stating this view. For a specific example see the statement by the IPOA president (Brooks, 2005).

entails for security practices: what does it mean for security practices when the number of firms selling price effective solutions to security problems in a market expands rapidly?

A first step towards answering that question is to underline that the private security business tends to focus on the technical and the managerial aspects of security. The reason is that private security firms aim to provide technically competent professional solutions to security problems. This logically pushes them to stress the centrality of professionalism and technical capacities. The way they do this obviously varies greatly. Some may work from a very specific competence (for example operating a specific Information Technology system) for others it may be far more general (for example providing competent guard services for investors in conflict contexts). Many firms stress their possibility to draw on a specialised staff for specific contracts to argue that this places them at the top of technical requirements in any specific field. Characteristically Dyncorp (one of the bigger US firms) explains on its website that “maintaining security is a global problem, but individual security needs are unique. Our flexible, integrated approach provides extensive technology and personal security solutions to protect people, facilities, and information.” Similarly, Ed Soyster speaking about his firm Military Professional Resources (MPRI) underscores its competence by claiming that it has “more generals than the Pentagon” on its staff lists (quoted in Mandel, 2002: p. 112). Firm in the sector tends to emphasise professionalism and technical competence and many add their flexibility to tailor their service to specific tasks.

When firms compete for contracts, the emphasis on technical expertise and professional competence is logically paired with an emphasis on cost effectiveness. Potential clients care about results but to also about costs. It is hence unsurprising that we find the cost effectiveness of the industry figuring prominently in the business’ self-promotion. In the US for example, BENS has produced a “Tail-to-Tooth” report suggesting that Pentagon’s defence budget could be halved if only the possibilities of outsourcing and privatizing in the sector were fully grasped.⁵ But also the firms themselves emphasise the cost-effectiveness of the services they offer. Cost effectiveness and technical professionalism usually figure side by side in a way Chris Taylor (of Blackwater, another large US firm) nicely illustrates when he argues that:

Send 10.000 UN troops to Darfur? A colossal waste of money. You do not create security and peace by throwing more mediocre, uncommitted people into the fray. 1000-2000 professional contractors could perform those same stability operations, safely turning over the operation to the UN and other NGOs to perform post-conflict operations. That is what they do best (Taylor, 2005).

The next step is to think about whether it matters for security practices that the private security business competes by this combination of technical expertise and cost effectiveness. It is argued here that it does. Competition in the industry is ultimately about convincing clients that a firm is more efficient than its competitors. But perhaps even more importantly, it is about convincing these potential clients that technically competent cost-effective security services is what they need in the first place. If that is not the case, it becomes irrelevant to know whether or not a firm is efficient and technically competent. If a potential client sees a problem above all as a socio-economic issue or as one best solved by negotiation, it makes little sense to promote tech-

⁵ The full report is available on the net at www.BENS.org as are a variety of interpretations and policy statements related to it.

nical and cost effective security services: the kinds of solutions considered will involve diplomacy and foreign aid, not security provision. Similarly if a client's key concern is limiting civilian casualties or establishing long term ties with a rebel group, technical competence and cost effectiveness may be less important than diplomatic skills, public authority or long term relations. It therefore becomes essential for the private security business that problems are defined as security problems and that the technical competence and cost effectiveness are important considerations when solutions are considered. We should therefore expect the industry self-promotion as well as the simple presence and growth of private contraction to refashion security practices in a direction where this is the case. There are at least two reasons this is occurring.

The first is that firms push their understanding of security practices onto their potential clients through direct lobbying. As in other normal business, security firms lobby both to reshape the regulatory environment and to promote specific contracts. Because of the centrality of states as regulators and as clients, lobbying is possibly even more central in the security sector than elsewhere. It is therefore not surprising to find constant reference to the close ties between firms and states (ICIJ, 2002b), a tendency perhaps epitomised by the much discussed links between Halliburton and vice president Cheney on which there is a flood of books and intense media coverage (Didion, 2006). The significance of lobbying for this argument is not that it is more common and intense than in other sectors (I am not sure it is). Nor is it that lobbying is costly and/or potentially illegal. Rather, lobbying by the private security business is significant here because it influences the framing problems. By lobbying private security firms frame problems as security problems solvable with the help of affordable technical competent measures. They alter the balance of arguments surrounding the questions on which they lobby. This is true even when the lobbying does not result in a contract. Through the lobbying process itself, private security firms alter the agenda, the arguments and the understandings involved in judging security matters. To the extent that the security understandings are reshaped, so are security practices.

Second, private security business are pulled into reshaping security practices: they are hired to do so. Private security firms are hired for training and consultancy. This may stand for something extremely narrow and technical as when a firm is hired to explain the general functioning of an armament system which it will itself operate for the armed forces or when it is training those who will operate the system. It may also be slightly broader as for example when firms develop military training programmes and strategy. For example, Cubic trains the Georgian armed forces (Paton Walsh, 2004). DynCorp offers consultancy to the Columbian armed forces (Bigwood, 2001). MPRI "develops and conducts instruction for the Army Force Management School and related courses" (www.mpri.com). A priori, these activities provide and communicate "technical" competencies in a narrow sense: how to use an arms system or how to develop an efficient military organization. However, these narrowly defined, technical training/consultancies play a significant role in shaping security practices. They involve the development of schemes of analysis and understanding as well as of routine forms of action that effectively give shape to security practices. Even narrowly defined security training works to make participants see problems as security problems and react to them accordingly.

More than this, the private security business is hired to shape security practices more broadly. Part of what the private security business does is to provide intelligence as Digital Globe and Space Imaging have in Afghanistan or Titan and CACI in Abu Ghraib. But even more broadly, private security firms are often hired to shape views on general political issues. The MPRI runs the African Centre for Strategic Studies. DynCorp holds contracts on the national, provincial and municipal levels in Iraq to assess threats, train Iraqi police and military personnel

and to advice on the reorganization of the Iraqi justice system (Isenberg 2004). This type of activity is designed to shape the general understandings of political, economic and social problems. Security concerns and efficiency are bound to figure prominently in their analysis. After all, the private security business is staffed by security professionals who are no less likely to be shaped by their professionalism than are professionals in other fields. If military sociology is right they are rather more likely than others because of the traditionally strict corporate rules of the profession.

None of this produces an unequivocally monolithic view of security where technical competence and cost-effectiveness reign uncontested. Competing views exist and will continue to do so. However, the current political context amplifies the private security business' impact on security practices. For one, the rapid expansion and heightened competition in the business pressure firms to shape security practices more innovatively and more effectively. As an observer of the defence industry argues, "the leading defence company of the future will be primarily a manipulator of opinions, in a diversity of markets, rather than the familiar engineering enterprise of the past. Some companies are already becoming this" (Lovering 2000: p. 174). For two, since the early 1980s, an overall pro-private-business-and-market-solutions-mood has been the backdrop of politics everywhere (Shipman, 1998; Gill, 1995). This means that when the private security business makes inroads into security practices, it does so echoing privatization and outsourcing debates in other areas. It also benefits from the advance of privatization elsewhere. On balance therefore, private security providers have pushing in open doors. For these two reasons, private providers have had a stronger impact on security practices than one might otherwise have expected.

This is born out by the changes in security practices. The self-representation of the private security business as a business of technical experts selling cost-effective and essential services is widely accepted. It is often considered "strategically effective", flexible, and a depositor of privileged "local" and situational knowledge not only among observers but more significantly in policy-making circles (e.g. Whelan 2003). As persuasively shown by Markusen (2003), this translates as a positive bias for private security providers when these are compared with public ones. Evidence of inefficiency and incompetence is dismissed as exceptions to the rule (for no good reason) and basic information gathering procedures are simply ignored. The consequence is that private sector security expertise is increasingly relied on by the entire range of actors working in zones where security is a substantial issue, ranging from conservationist NGOs in national parks to states training their armed forces (Avant, 2005: chap. 5 and Howe, 2001 respectively). But even more significant is the extent to which the sector is employed for a range of activities with a tenuous and distant link to security narrowly defined. The business hence finds itself involved in tasks for which it has no particular competence. For example it is or has been involved in reforming the justice system in Iraq (Isenberg, 2004), in negotiating peace accords in Sudan (Chatterjee, 2004) and explaining democracy in Croatia (Silverstein, 2000).

To sum up, precisely because the business does what it keeps telling everyone it does – namely provide cost effective professional security services – it has reshaped security practices. Through its direct lobbying, technical training and its provision of general advice on security policies, the private security business has brought NGOs, publics at large and security professionals think about security increasingly in terms of costs and technicalities. This shift towards and expansion of technico-managerial security practices becomes more significant by the fact that private business strives to keep aloof of political debates.

3. De-politicizing Security Practices by Not Meddling in Politics

A second important impact of the private security business on security practices has been de-politicization. The reason the rise of the sector has had that consequence is (as the firms keep saying) that the private security providers do not engage in political debates. This in turn has resulted in a displacement of security practices. They come to be located outside public political debate; they are de-politicized. This dislocation reinforces the technical and managerial nature of security practices by effectively restricting the space for contesting both that understanding of security and for advancing alternative (non security oriented) understandings and remedies to problems.

If there is one thing the private security business insists heavily on (besides its professionalism and efficiency) it is certainly that it is following the agendas of clients, it is answering a demand. It is shaping neither demand nor agenda. Firms do not do politics. They do not want to engage in debates about political priorities. Of course, no firm would deny that it may influence political outcomes. It is part of their technical efficiency to do so. Blackwater for example has an advertisement featuring “Bosnia, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Iraq” as header under which the firm proceeds to tell its potential clients “..those of us who enjoy freedom and democracy are now bound to help share it with the world. Through selfless commitment and compassion for all people, Blackwater works to make a difference...”(Advertisement in *IPOA*, 2005: 4). The “selflessness and compassion” is exercised for a legitimate cause and this legitimate cause is defined by politics, not by Blackwater itself. Most firms are keen to work for good causes. They are also willing to varying degrees to come out in public to underline their capacity to contribute to a given good cause including spreading democracy in Iraq, keeping peace in Afghanistan or capturing Charles Taylor (Rosenfeld, 2005; Opiel and Hart, 2004; Catán and Peel, 2003). However, firms (as they keep repeating) are not willing to engage in the public debate about which causes are good. Just as the military or the police see themselves as acting in continuation and accordance with politics, so does the private security business.

There are crucial differences between private and public security providers, however, with important implications for what their respective resistance to engage in politics means for security practices. The key difference is that most countries have political procedures – admittedly imperfect and ineffective to varying degrees – designed to control both how the (public) military and security forces engage in politics and to check way the executive uses force (Fisher, 2005; DCAF, 2002). The exact nature of these political procedures varies with the context. But they tend to involve procedures subjecting executive and security professionals to wider political scrutiny. Illustrations of this include procedures requiring uses of force to be reported to parliament or perhaps even approved by it, restrictions on the amounts and kinds of military assistance can be exported without legislative approval, legislative committees to which the armed forces report and through which they can be heard and so on. This type of political check on the use of force exists to ensure a (potential) continuous political, non-security establishment involvement with the use of force. These processes in other words operate to trigger public discussion when force is used about whether or not a use of military/policing is the best solution or whether there are other more appropriate alternatives. In this debate the military/security establishment is but one voice of many.

For the private military business the logic is different. The safeguards that exist for public military involvement are mostly either inapplicable or ineffective (Leander, 2007 forthcoming).

Political controls of the use of force focus on the use of force by public security professionals. This makes historical sense. The outlawing of mercenarism means that private business has played a limited role in the use of force internationally and when it has played a role it has been under the auspices of public armed forces. Logically, therefore the political checks on private security that do exist typically cover the areas where private firms have a traditional open and legitimate involvement (arms exports, logistics) but leave out other areas and anything resembling military operations as it is assumed that this is a public monopoly. This may make historical sense but it is nonetheless inadequate in the face of the current expansion of private security where the Rubicon separating public troops engaging in combat from private contractors that do not has long since been crossed (Guillory, 2001; Zamparelli, 1999). Moreover, since using private business is a conventional way of circumventing political control, there is reason to believe that a weak control over the private security business is both widespread and intentional (Bigo 2004). The weakness of political control over the private security business has the consequence that the political debate ensured (at least potentially) by political controls when the public military is involved is correspondingly weakened or absent when it comes to the private security business.

In such a context, the security business' unwillingness to engage in politics comes to mean something very different from the public military's unwillingness to engage in political debate. It may be presented – and thought of – as expressing a wish to leave politics to sort out political priorities. The implication, however, is that the discussion about political priorities and politics as such tends to be displaced and to disappear from sight. Since the political safe-guards are inoperable, the discussions and decisions about why, when and how to use force are located within the security establishment. Those directly involved in security operations discuss among themselves whether or not given contracts and engagements are acceptable and legal or not. Decisions are displaced from a public political process to a narrow technocratic one. From a discussion involving the entire spectrum of stake holders, ranging from the legislative branch (also opposition politicians), the media, interest group organizations, a broader public we move to a far narrower one. In effect, the debate over which issues are security issues and who is to deal with them becomes one involving mainly security professionals from the armed forces/police, ministries of defence and possibly the executive branch. The implication is that the voice of those who would like to define a problem as something else than a security problem, and to look for non military/policing technical solutions to it, is marginalised if heard at all. When alternative views are not heard, they are unlikely to be adopted. In this context staying aloof of politics by not engaging in public political debate is a matter of marginalizing debate outside the security establishment, of moving the problem definition out of politics, i.e. of effectively de-politicizing security.

This de-politicization of security has two immediate consequences for security practices. First, it tends to make money a (if not *the*) key criterion for whose security concerns are dealt with. Indeed, as political debate about the use of force is displaced, money moves in as pivotal for the decisions of which clients and causes deserve to have firms working for them. Indeed, although all established larger firms in the private security business make a point out of working exclusively for legitimate clients it is important to realise two things (e.g. Spicer 1999). First, the legitimate clients for which the firms work (obviously) also have to be clients capable of paying for the services. This means that would be legitimate clients with no capacity to pay will not get services from private companies. While cash rich researchers, NGOs, international organizations, corporations, and governments will be able to buy security services, cash-starved political

movements, ordinary citizens, refugees and children are not. It is from this perspective that observers of politics in Africa worry about the return of neo-colonial proxy wars where rich firms/individuals/rulers can fight out their disagreements with the help of private proxy armies (Musah 2002). Less drastically put, it certainly is the case that a Swiss cheese security coverage, where the wholes are made by financial weakness, is a correlate of making money rather than politics decisive in matters of security.

Second, de-politicization has altered security practices with regard to the tricky question of regulating who should be allowed to buy security services. Instead of having the issue settled by political considerations primarily, decision is left to the markets i.e. to firms who need contracts and customers. It is important to underline that what is a “legitimate” client is always a matter of interpretation and subject to intense contestation. Who is the legitimate ruler is a – if not *the* – key issue at stake in contemporary armed conflicts (Holsti 1996). Moreover, as economic considerations become significant, traditional evaluations of legitimacy may be reversed. For example, MPRI convinced the US to reconsider its policy towards Equatorial Guinea (allied with Cuba and North Korea). The firm successfully argued that it should be allowed to take on a contract with the country since otherwise a French firm would. By its own description MPRI is now assisting the country with the development of a National Security Enhancement Plan with “an integrated team of defense, security, and Coast Guard experts to provide a detailed set of recommendations to the government of Equatorial Guinea concerning its defence, littoral, and related environmental management requirements, as well as detailed implementation processes” (www.mpri.com). This engagement would have been unlikely if a political discussion had taken place. The extent to which the replacement of politics by money has affected security practices is expressed most starkly in the virtual absence of effective limits on clients. Even clients almost everyone would concede are illegitimate will find it possible to persuade some firm to sell them military services. A drug cartel in Cali e.g. paid USD 10 million to obtain the material and expertise necessary to bomb their rival Pablo Escobar in the early 1990s (Kouri 2005).

Third and finally, depoliticization – via the growing uncertainty about clients – has resulted in security practices increasingly caught by a traditional security dilemma. The “security dilemma” refers to the dilemma of having to prepare for war (building up armed forces e.g.) even though doing so increases the insecurity of the opponent and hence the likelihood of war. The security dilemma is anchored in perceptions of what might happen rather than what really does. The imagined capacity of opponents of various kinds to buy security services on the private market is sufficient to justify further militarization and expenditure of defense which in turn deepens the traditional security dilemma. An episode from Ghana in 2004 exemplifies this dynamic (Addo 2004): On 13 August 2004 *The Analyst* (a Liberian news paper) carries a story about Ghanaian opposition leaders massively recruiting mercenaries in the Ivory Coast, Togo, Senegal and Guinea to attack Ghana. President Adullah Wade (of Senegal) and a former national security boss of Ghana, Kojo Tsikata, are said to be implicated. The story is carried in the Ghanaian papers *Statesman* (August 19) and *Insight* (August 27-29). The *Accra Daily Mail* claims to have received information about mercenaries planning to strike from Ivory Coast (August 23). Ministry of the Interior confirms that “some people with links to the opposition” are moving along the border regions Ivory Coast and Guinea. The president issues a call for security agencies to be vigilant (26 August). This is where the story ends. It turns out to be a hoax and *The Analyst* presents public excuses. However, the episode bolstered the Ghanaian security establishment and its demand for better resources; the story showed what could have happened and might still happen. For this article, it illustrates the point that even if private security firms do not actually sell ser-

vices to an opponent, the suspicion that they might is sufficient to deepen traditional security dilemmas.

The insistence of the private security business that it is not engaging in politics is hence a claim that should be treated seriously. The private security business prefers *not* to engage in public political debates about which issues are security issues and how political priorities should be structured. The implication is a de-politicization of security practices. Money becomes essential in deciding which problems are a security problem, how they should be dealt with and to whose advantage. The consequence is Swiss cheese security coverage and accentuated security dilemmas. This process of de-politicization further marginalises the alternatives to techno-managerial security understandings that are already effectively out-competed by the technical efficiency of the private security business. To grasp the full significance of these changes security practices it is important to consider how it relates to the public sector and the state more specifically.

4. Serving States' Militarized Security Practices

The full effect of private security providers on security practices becomes clear only if one looks at the close links between the sector and states and the extent to which also states' security practices have evolved as a consequence of the rise of the private security business. As already argued in the pages of this journal (Porter 2005), it is generally highly misleading to think of public and private power in zero sum terms, where gains in state power mirror losses in firm power and vice versa. In Porter's argument they develop in parallel as part of relatively autonomous functional sub-systems. In this account they support and re-shape each other. To grasp this it is useful to listen to what the private security business says about itself. In particular it is useful to take its insistence that it works with states and not against them more seriously.

The private security industry is closely intertwined with states. The business itself has been created by the willingness of states to diminish direct control over security affairs and to allow increased outsourcing and privatization. States continue to shape the market but at the same time they resist regulation attempts (Hulse, 2004). States continue to be among the key clients of security firms, even if one should not underrate the significance of private business, international organizations, NGOs and assorted individuals. States, finally, are directly involved in the business. Many firms originated and continue to operate as (para-) public firms, sometimes partially owned by the state. It is common also for entirely private firms to appoint high-ranking politicians and administrators to their boards and as directors (ICIJ, 2002a). Finally, firms have close links to the armed forces. EO was linked to the South African Buffalo Battalion, MPRI is linked to the US armed forces, Sandline and its successors/ spin-offs are linked to the UK special services. But even firms that recruit from a variety of countries (e.g. Erinys and Aegis) will have an overwhelming majority of their employees with origins in (various) national defence establishments. Everyone in the industry is an ex-something from the public armed forces.

As this indicates, it is not meaningful to assume a zero-sum relationship between states and the private security business. The relations between the two are more complex. Some parts of "states" encourage, work for and benefit from the development of the private security business and inversely the private security business is closely linked to (some parts of) the state. The relevant question in the context of this article is what implications this has for security practices. I will suggest here that the key to answering is to probe how the blurring boundaries shifts power

positions inside states and through this, who weighs on and gives shape to state security practices.

Two different groups within states are empowered by the private security business. The first of these includes those who benefit directly or indirectly from private security business. Just as we talk about “dual use technology” moving between the civilian and military spheres, we can think of individuals who do the same, dual sphere individuals. Staff and directors, board members and technicians of private security companies frequently also hold a position in the state institutions including the armed forces, the government or an administration. These persons include the generals on the lists of MPRI ready to take on a temporary contract with the firm. It also includes politicians who are closely tied to firms such as Frank Carlucci (defence secretary under Regan) who served as a board director at Vinell (ICIJ, 2002b: 3), or those involved indirectly with the industry through more or less elaborate systems of economic kick-backs as has come out in the European “Augusta”, “Flick”, or Elf-Acquitaine scandals which all have in common that they unveiled complex systems of party finance involving large military contractors (Joly, 2003). The point here is that growth of the private security business bolsters the position of these dual sphere individuals. Their intermediation becomes more important both for the state and for the business and the rewards they can expect grow correspondingly. With the expansion of the private security business, dual sphere individuals gain not only economically but also in terms of status and centrality for policy-making. Since the private security business is “their” business in a very direct way, they can also be expected to work to promote it actively within the state. The term “business politician” describes a specific type of politician that was developing because of the growing closeness of business and politics in Italy (della Porta and Pizzorno, 1996). I am arguing here that one sub-category of the business politician, the “security business politician” is becoming an increasingly common and increasingly prominent figure as a consequence of the expansion of the private military sector.

The second group empowered by the emergence of the private security business comprises those who share the private security business’ understanding of security and politics more widely without being linked to it. This group share with the private security industry a tendency to expand the number of issues that are thought of as security issues and to seek technical rather than political/diplomatic solutions to problems that arise. There is a long tradition for thinking that these views are particularly prevalent among security professionals whose professionalism make them focus their attention on the technical aspects of security (Janowitz, 1971). There is an equally longstanding tradition for worrying about the “military adventurism” of politicians with exaggerated beliefs about what can be achieved through a technical competent and effective use of force (Desch, 1999). Both of these groups are susceptible of being strengthened by the rise of the private security industry. They share the private business understanding of security issues and, more tangibly, the industry makes it feasible to expand and extend strategies where the use of force plays a central role. One would consequently expect, to see a reshuffling of the weight of different institutions within states expressed by intense competition and disagreement. In the US this expectation is currently born out as there is considerable disagreement between the Department of Defence and the State Department regarding how to deal with the private sector and how much to regulate it (GAO 2005).

This bolstering of those who share the private business’ technical and managerial approach affects states’ security practices. It amounts to giving the persons and individuals most prone to have a techno-managerial understanding of security an increased say over how the security. Since this understanding is centred on technical solutions, emphasising cost saving it tends

to limit the scope for contestation. The consequence is a militarization of security practices in a classical sense.⁶ Ultimately of course the worry is that one could end up in what Harold Laswell termed a “Garrison State” where “crisis accentuation of state power tends to subordinate all social values and institution to considerations of military potential, and how as a result military and police specialists are placed in advantageous positions, within the decision process” (Laswell, 1997: 102).

On the basis of the argument made here, however, there is no foundation for arguing that any particular state has turned into a “garrison state” or that states in general have. The point here is more modestly that the development of the private security business logically drives state security practices in this direction even if the significance of this drive is far from uniform. The security business politician as well as of the reshuffling of security institutions is bound to vary considerably across contexts. This is so because national security cultures vary (Katzenstein, 1996) enormously with the dual consequence that privatization has been uneven and that it has been dealt with in diverging ways. For example, in post-second world war German security thinking the defence forces are a school of the nation and fear that they could escape control is deeply rooted. As a consequence privatization and outsourcing in the security sector has remained relatively limited compared e.g. to the situation in the UK. But more than this, the post-second world war forces have made the primacy of policy and diplomatic alternatives as well as the individual soldier’s duty to resist unjust orders part and parcel of their training (Longhurst, 2004). In such a context, a development of security business politicians and extensive reshuffling of positions is unlikely. The development of the private security business is more limited and it is more difficult to turn into an advantage for those who would share and benefit from a technical-managerial understanding of security. Similarly, the strongly statist French armed forces are prone to be more suspicious of private business involvement than are the more liberal UK ones (Sénat, 2000L; Lanxade, 2001). Again this restricts the extent of privatization and outsourcing and more centrally limits its imprint on state security practices.

The emphasis on variability should not be exaggerated. It is far easier to underestimate the effects of the rise of the private security business on the security practices of states officially resisting privatization than to overestimate it. The restructuring of the security industry world wide and the intense competition for market shares that this has engendered, affects also those states least prone to privatize and outsource (Kaldor, 1998). An increasing number of standards and security priorities are established beyond the state either through markets or regulatory agencies where private firms have an increasing. For example, at the EU the security services offered by UK companies put pressure on German and French firms to compete and on the governments to create the frames allowing this competition. Similarly, the BISP is pushing for the development of regulatory standards bound to reshape also French and German policies on the sector. In addition to this, private companies have a part in virtually all multilateral operations. “You could fight without us but it would be difficult” is Paul Lombardi’s judgement (2003).⁷ This means that also states that do not encourage privatization and outsourcing have working relations with the business to the extent that they participate in these operations. Last but not least, political debates about security are not nationally bounded. They engage international media, international institutions, foreign governments and translational civil society groups. Isolating security prac-

⁶ Militarization is “the permeation of an entire society by the self-serving ideology of the officer and soldier” (Lasswell, 1997: 107).

⁷ Lombardi is a former CEO of Dyncorp.

tices in any one state from the effects of the rise of the private security industry is consequently an elusive quest.

The private security business is not deceiving when it claims that it works for states and does in no way want undermine them. More accurately the private security business empowers specific groups within states, namely the groups that either benefit directly from its existence or the groups that share its overall world view and priorities for a variety reasons. These groups have played a significant part in the industry's expansion by promoting it inside states. More generally, their empowerment and their presence in states reinforce the technocratization and de-politicization of security that is a consequence of the expansion of the industry. The blurred private/public boundary, the fact that the industry does not work against states but with, for and through them is not a sign of the insignificance of the private security business. It is constitutive of its success and of its impact on security understandings.

Conclusion:

In a recent article on power Steven Lukes argues that the key to understanding the relative power of different agents over different issues is to look at the significance of the outcomes they can bring about: "I will have more power than you if I can bring about more 'significant' outcomes than those you can bring about" he argues (Lukes, 2005: p. 481). If we accept this understanding of power there can be little doubt that the private security business is powerful: it has reshaped security practices. The business has made security practices more technocratic and managerial. It has de-politicized them by reducing the role and scope for political contestation. And it has altered security practices of all actors including of states. The private security business has in other words altered who decides what a security problem is, how it will be dealt with by whom and on what conditions. It has increased the range of security problems dealt with by the use of force. It has decreased the scope for politically contesting this development and for financially weak groups to claim security coverage. This paper has centred on the mechanisms by which these indeed very significant outcomes have come about.

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Colophon:

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