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978-0-521-76471-1 - Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics

Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams

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Security Beyond the State

Across the globe, from mega-cities to isolated resource enclaves, the provision and governance of security takes place within assemblages that are de-territorialized in terms of actors, technologies, norms and discourses. They are embedded in a complex transnational architecture, defying conventional distinctions between public and private, global and local. Drawing on theories of globalization and late modernity, along with insights from criminology, political science and sociology, *Security Beyond the State* maps the emergence of the global private security sector and develops a novel analytical framework for understanding these global security assemblages. Through in-depth examinations of four African countries – Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Africa – it demonstrates how global security assemblages effect the distribution of social power, the dynamics of state stability, and the operations of the international political economy, with significant implications for who gets secured and how in a global era.

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Preface

The research for this book was made possible through a generous grant from the Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC), Grant Number RES-223-25-0074. We are particularly grateful to the ESRC for its support. Special thanks are also due to Stewart Croft as the Director of the New Security Challenges Programme for his continued encouragement and upbeat enthusiasm for the project. The ESRC grant facilitated an intensive two-year period of field-work and travel. On our return to Aberystwyth, the Department of International Politics always provided an inspiring and collegial work environment. The Department was our intellectual home for a decade and occupies a special place in our hearts. To our friends, colleagues and students from Aberystwyth: we are forever grateful for your support, your constructive criticism and challenges – and for all the good times along the way!

We also owe thanks to other institutions. The Department of Political Studies at the University of Cape Town kindly accepted us as Visiting Fellows during one of our stays in Cape Town and provided a welcoming and conducive base from which to conduct our research. Very special thanks are due to Neil Walker and the Department of Law at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence for hosting us during the winter and spring of 2007 and for allowing us the privilege of working in the tranquil and productive surroundings of the EUI. The final stages of the project were completed as Visiting Fellows at the School of Politics and International Studies at the University of Queensland in Brisbane. We could hardly have wished for a more convivial setting in which to finalize the manuscript, and we are very grateful to the School for providing such an enjoyable and intellectually stimulating environment. For the past year, the University of Ottawa has been a welcoming and exciting new institution in which to bring the project to completion. We are very grateful to our colleagues for making it so.

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When we started this research, it is fair to say that we did not know quite what to expect. The sheer lack of secondary material and resources meant that much would depend on the ability to conduct primary research and on access to people and places. Many predicted that we would be met with closed doors, with standardized PR statements and with attempts to control information. Our experience has been very different. From company headquarters to local operations in Africa, all the major private security companies (PSCs) and resource companies have granted us access and interviews. The same applies to dozens of national and local security companies in Africa, who generously shared their knowledge and experience with us. In the course of the project we have conducted well over 100 formal interviews, in London; Washington, DC; Brussels; Madrid; South Africa; Nigeria; Sierra Leone; Kenya and Uganda. Others shared their insights and viewpoints with us in more informal settings and casual conversations, on security patrols, at checkpoints and in city streets and bars. There are simply too many names to mention. Others prefer to remain anonymous. Thanks are due to all. We are especially grateful to the people who facilitated our visits to the more inaccessible research sites in Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

In developing our analysis, we have benefited from the comments and insights of numerous audiences and individuals. We have presented the research, at various stages of completion, at countless venues and workshops. Throughout we have learnt from reactions and criticisms and would like to express our gratitude to everyone who arranged or attended these discussions. As newcomers to the discipline of criminology, we also learnt a great deal by participating in the ESRC network 'The Changing Political Economy of Security' organized by Ian Loader and Sarah Percy, where we encountered many of the criminologists whose work has both inspired and enabled us to conduct our own analysis. Finally, thanks to Adam Sandor for compiling the index with great skill and efficiency.