

SECURITY SECTOR FUSIONS AND THE REMAKING OF POLITICAL LIFE IN
THE US AND BEYOND

by

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DEDICATION

For my family past, present, and future, near and far, human and not; for my teachers, friends, and community; for my committee and for you, my committee chair; for the university; for my kidney donor, Emma Young of Missoula; for the other as much as for myself and for the lands we call home gratitude begun is unending. ‘Amor Fati’: I will try and remember it.

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ABSTRACT

This project centers the social and political impacts of changing security governance paradigms across local, national, and transnational contexts. I contend recent, globalized transitions toward the use by political states of non-state policing and military actors are centrally productive of nation-state entropy and entail the collapse of liberal legal and political norms. I begin with a reading of the political philosopher Wendy Brown's writings on the relationship between neoliberalism and declining nation-state sovereignty and, *pace* Brown, argue that we cannot understand neoliberalism without first understanding security-sector fusions. Next, I draw on the historical scholarship of Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira, Andrew Phillips, and others to address the deep history of force contracting models. This history suggests the methodological point that we cannot read the full scope and significance of contemporary security-sector fusions without first locating them on a much longer historical timeline than is sometimes activated within critical security studies. It also helps me to argue that modern legal and political logics took shape with respect to the evolution of coercive powers and authorities. From there, I draw on scholarly and journalistic sources to examine the confluence of liberal law and contemporary security-sector fusions. The causes and manifestations of re-invented security governance regimes, I show, render obsolete the public-private distinction in law and politics and betoken their diachronic eclipse. In my penultimate chapter, I draw on the writings of international relations scholars and political scientists Sean McFate, Michael C. Williams, and Rita Abrahamsen to discuss theoretical frameworks used to explain security-sector fusions in relation to the liberal imaginary. Via Eve Tuck's critique of assemblage theory, I argue that while these theorists accurately link security-sector fusions to the sublation of liberal law and the nation-state system, they struggle to accommodate political values and identities. In my conclusion, I pose a question about the future of emancipatory projects within the more politically heteronomous future this project discloses: what happens to emancipatory projects in American Studies after the liberal-democratic political and legal imaginaries become antiquated?

CHAPTER ONE

PROPADEUTIC TO THE STUDY OF SECURITY-SECTOR
FUSIONSChapter Preface

When the Rwandan genocide commenced in April of 1994, a remarkable although today mostly forgotten meeting occurred between Kofi Annan, then Deputy of Peace Keeping Operations for the United Nations (UN), and a delegation sent to the UN by the storied South African paramilitary company, Executive Outcomes (EO). As retold by international relations scholar Sean McFate, EO's representatives were there to present Annan with a proposal to deploy their well-equipped and battle-hardened private army to Rwanda on behalf of the international community with the intention of stopping the incipient genocide its tracks.¹ From there, EO would secure the nation on behalf of the international community until the latter could generate its own response, or were no such international force to materialize, EO's units could remain in the field for as long as was necessary for the country to return to peace. EO could deploy its forces almost immediately, too, with very little red tape to work through, and almost no political debate to slow them down; for as a privately financed transnational military company, EO's existence squared ambiguously, if at all, with national and international regulatory agencies and legal norms. In fact, for reasons I share in the third and fourth chapters of this project, they operated outside of the inter-national system almost entirely.² I am only

¹ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*. 38-39.

² It is true that in 1999 the African National Congress managed to ban EO from conducting business in South Africa. However, EO personnel reconstituted elsewhere under a different business name. Furthermore, despite the ANC's success in banning EO, over the next two decades South African would go on to become the largest private

speculating, but for Annan, EO's proposal must have been at the very least worthy of consideration. Not only had none of the world's major powers expressed any interest in a military intervention, EO's plan was as realistic as it was expedient, and minutes mattered. Yet, in the end, Annan averred, and so today instead of telling a story about how a private military company successfully prevented this genocide, thirty years later we narrate a different history altogether.

The question naturally emerges as to why Annan said 'no' to EO's offer. If their plan was indeed realistic—and by all indications it was— then upon what scales did Annan weigh the alternative of doing, effectively, nothing as preferable to an EO-led intervention? It turns out that Annan provided an answer to this very question during his later tenure as General Secretary for the United Nations. In 1998, while addressing an audience gathered at Oxford to hear him speak on the increasingly controversial subject of UN-sponsored military interventions, a reporter asked him about this decision to decline EO's offer. Annan's response was, "the world may not be ready for privately enforced peace."³ I cannot look inside of Annan's head to know exactly what he was thinking here, but I imagine that he was considering two different futures. In one, the presence or absence of peace depends as much, if not more, on non-state actors and institutions as it does on the international system; in the other, nation-states and the inter-national community hold on as the primary locus of legitimacy in the exercise or prevention of political violence. But regardless of what Annan's exact calculus was, the actual effects of his decision

security market. in the world. Today, nearly all of South Africa's urban centers rely exclusively on the private security market rather than public policing agencies to combat crime and maintain public order. Cf. Diphoorn, Tessa. 'Who Do You Call? Private Security Policing in Durban, South Africa. 90-107.

³ Annan, Kofi. "The Secretary-General Reflects on 'Intervention.'" June 26, 1998. Quoted in McFate, Sean. *Modern Mercenary*.

perhaps imply he found the longer-term consequences of an EO-led intervention into the Rwandan genocide as ultimately more dangerous or problematic than choosing to support and finance their proposed intervention.

I offer no opinions here regarding Annan's decision. With certainty, however, I will say that a mere thirty years after Annan's forgotten meeting with EO's delegates, the question of whether his decision was the right one has become entirely theoretical. In fact, the modal future that Annan sought to either avert or at the very least postpone, this future in which the presence of peace or war depends on as much or more on non-state force actors and institutions than it does on the nation-state system and the inter-national system the latter subtends has already come to pass. In a matter of three decades, roughly speaking from the 1990's until today, countless variations on the theme of non-state force actors have exploded and multiplied around the world and they have become massively influential across political scales and contexts ranging from the local to the global and everything in between. In this dissertation research and writing project, I will be offering a version of that story. I will share numerous examples of this phenomena, and I will deliver a broadly explanatory framework for interpreting the social and political impacts of these significant changes within the social structure of coercive powers and authorities.

Chapter Introduction

In its briefest formulation, this dissertation concerns the social and political impacts of 21st century force hybridization movements, what by another name are sometimes also called security-sector fusions between public and private force actors and institutions. I will be providing many empirical examples of such dynamics, but in the final analysis my deepest

concerns are theoretical: what to make of this empirical abundance. My research question is therefore as prosaic as it is open-ended: what are the social and political impacts of contemporary force hybridization movements? But if my question is broad, it is broad for good reason; namely, the demonstrable fact that today security-sector hybridizations now intersect, in one way or another, nearly all aspects of coercive power and authority around the world. In the conduct of post-modern warfare and across numerous global domestic policing contexts, in patterns of incarceration and migration control, in surveillance and intelligence gathering activities, in the execution of both corporate and national foreign policy, and in the securitization of terrestrial and oceanic trade routes and beyond, security-sector fusions must now be counted among the most prominent structural features which define the global security landscape. In other words, wherever coercive legalities, powers, and practices take on their site-specific shapes, there too one will nearly always find greater or lesser degrees of hybridization between public and private force actors. Thus, if Kofi Annan could in 1998 still intelligibly gesture at theoretical, legal, practical, or moral needs to keep state and non-state policies and practices related to the exercise or prevention of political violence separate, then by contrast the new security governance paradigms I investigate in this dissertation reflect an antipodal reality—the unintelligibility and impracticality of making these same distinctions in the present.

There is a newly globalized norm in the social organization of coercive powers and authorities, and it is centrally defined by the thoroughgoing hybridization of state and non-state actors and institutions. In connection with the political imaginary, security sector fusions impact political life as well as politicized lives across numerous scales and contexts, but since it is within liberal democracies, or at least what is left of them, that the public-private distinction

maintains its strongest grip on the political imaginary, the myriad impacts of globalized transitions toward fused models of security governance are and will continue to be especially legible within them. Consequently, even as this dissertation moves freely across temporal and geographic boundaries in its efforts to locate and interpret contemporary security-sector fusions, my main focus while thinking about their social and political impacts will be their relation to, and impacts upon, the liberal democratic political imaginary. Beginning with the significances of security-sector fusions for the public-private distinction, at a minimum the fusions I describe throughout this project put that distinction into question. However, as I argue, there is much more to it than that. Security-sector fusions, I contend, transform this core principle of liberal social organization into a vestigial organ of governance; or to put it differently, they make it into modernity's appendix. And given the deep historical, legal, and philosophical connections between the public-private distinction and the modern nation-state system, I contend they also index the erosion of nation-state models of sovereignty. Not all at once, not overnight, but surely and inexorably do security-sector fusions thus spearhead a dialectical development into a more politically heteronomous tomorrow after tomorrow.

On the front end, these arguments can appear strange or perhaps seem to contradict current political and legal realities, news cycles, and countless other discourses too many to name. There was a national election two weeks ago, after all, and I'd also bet my right thumb that there is no shortage of lawyers currently trying cases related *de jure* and *de facto* to the bedrock liberal principle of the public-private distinction. Historians, too, might initially raise an eyebrow. Past political states of nearly every stripe have depended on various forms of mercenaryism to accomplish their internal and external security objectives throughout much of

the historical record, and this has also been true across the history of the liberal nation-state. We might even go so far as to say that as soon as capital accumulation first appeared in history, so too did the opportunity for mercenaryism in one form or another appear along with it, perhaps offering something of an analogue to the standard maxim concerning the world's oldest profession. So what would be unique about today's avatars? I will only gesture at an answer here, but as a form of political *bricolage*, contemporary security-sector fusions transpire against a temporal backdrop in which the nation-state system and the public-private distinction have already become ossified political, cultural, legal, and ideological coordinates, which have already reached their historical zeniths as core principles for the social organization of the legal, economic, and political powers held and circulated among heterogenous particularities. And just as importantly, these same political and legal norms have also long been sculpting collective political affects and filiations. When evaluating the social and political impacts of contemporary security-sector fusions, these are the contextual factors that need to stay at the front of our mind.

But if in fact latter-day security governance trends are distinctive in the ways that I am claiming, how do we begin to make sense of them, especially given the cultural legacies I have just described? The foremost methodological challenge comes from the double fact that, one, the political imagination is already largely overdetermined by (at times sacrosanct, at times reviled) distinctions between things public and things private; and two, that this same political imaginary has now been long contoured by centuries of quasi-naturalized affective and cognitive fidelities to the nation-state model. Thus, both affirmations and critiques of the nation-state system and the system of property relations this system subtends can inadvertently reproduce lexical and social-ontological assumptions themselves grounded upon a nostalgic political imaginary, one that is

discontinuous with the facts attending to the 21st century reorganization of coercive powers and authorities. So in addition to this business about the weakening of the public-private distinction and the erosion of the nation-state system—my two key points— there is also a methodological question hanging in the background about how best to read the empirical realities of contemporary security-sector fusions. On the one hand, they destabilize normative legal and political logics, but on the other hand, these same logics remain the language of the realm. While I never fully respond to this dilemma, nonetheless I believe I can through the study of contemporary security-sector fusions at the very least provoke a more radical and at times open-ended questioning of contemporary political life.

On that note, this project thus serves as an opening rather than an ending, and its success in disclosing the social and political impacts of security sector fusions in large part hinges on the extent to which I am able to convey the troubling theoretical challenges attending to their interpretation. How, then, should we think about their social and political impacts? Are they simply another variation on a continuously evolving but essentially unbroken timeline of state/non-state partnerships? Am I overstating how strongly they disrupt the empirical valence of the liberal-democratic political imaginary in its relation to political reality? Or are security-sector fusions perhaps harbingers of a more fundamental geopolitical rupture? You will have guessed it: my answer is that this new norm in the social organization of coercive powers and authorities betokens the collapse of the public-private distinction and implies the erosion of nation-state sovereignties.

Looking ahead to what's left in this introductory chapter, I have two remaining tasks in mind to help set the scope, stakes, and terms of this project. First, I want to step outside of my

narrower focus on security-sector fusions in order to locate this dissertation within a wider theoretical context. The study of security-sector fusions is important and interesting in its own right, however as I will be discussing in the next section it is also extremely relevant to at least one strand of contemporary political philosophy comprehensively articulated by the political philosopher Wendy Brown.⁴ Brown's trailblazing work on the themes of nation-state entropy and democracy-in-decline are important for my project because in addition to making my study of security-sector fusions appear less parochial, it will also allow me to refine the core issues that are at stake in the analysis of evolving security governance paradigms. Then, after placing my own work alongside Brown's, in my final introductory section I will transition to a broad outline of my project.

Security Sector Fusions and the Ambiguity of Sovereignty in the 21st Century

I am claiming the contemporary amalgamation of public and private force actors and institutions puts into eclipse key elements of the liberal-democratic political imaginary, beginning with the public-private distinction. As revealed by the global security studies scholars Joakim Berndtsson and Maria Stern, we can start to see the scope and scale of widespread breakdowns in the meaning of the public-private distinction across countries as diverse as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sweden, Brazil, Niger, the United States, Bulgaria, Russia, India, and far beyond in the fact that the number of persons now serving on behalf of local, state,

⁴ To foreshadow, Brown's philosophical project is self-consciously an extension of Michel Foucault's. I say this in advance because I will be using the name of Foucault in this document, but only to the extent that it is a necessary addition for interpreting Wendy Brown's work. As Brown puts it in *Undoing the Demos*, I am seeking to think with, against, and apart from Foucault on subjects that would frankly not have interested him or to which he would have objected, including democracy, citizenship, and histories of political thought" (78).

and national policing agencies (that is, agencies typically associated with the ‘public’ domain) has recently been markedly surpassed by the number of persons finding employment within the private security sector.⁵ These non-state security service providers range from small, locally-owned businesses consisting of a few employees, to vast transnational corporate entities employing upwards of 750,000 personnel. Regardless of the scale of any one company, however, the collective ranks of non-state security actors now greatly surpass the number of state-financed public security officers. Admittedly, this fact alone does not automatically entail a breakdown in the meaning of the public-private distinction. Properly codified, properly kept apart, these two forms of policing can at least in theory be held together in either a state of balance or tension without upending the meaning of the public-private distinction. However, that is not what is happening.

The deeper issue Berndtsson and Stern are noticing is the fact that across political cartographies these two forms of policing now often blend with one another; e.g., ostensibly ‘private’ police frequently replace the symbolic identities and functions of their public sector analogues within the social spaces they mutually occupy, and the reverse holds true as well. For instance, public police officers across numerous global contexts now routinely avail themselves to private companies for hire as private security guards, and across contexts privately employed security agents now also commonly fulfill public security roles, tasks, and systemic functions.⁶ The former scenario is not simply a case of ‘moonlighting,’ too, for in many such instances the public officers hired by private companies to securitize their business operations retain their

⁵ Berndtsson, Joakim and Stern, Maria. *Private Security Guards: Authority, Control, and Governance?* 51-61.

⁶ Cf. Higate, Doctor Paul and Utas, Mats. *Private security in Africa: From the global assemblage to the everyday.* Chapters 1, 2, 5, 8. Cf., Parrish, Will and Brown, Allen. “A Canadian Energy Company Bought an Oregon Sheriff Department.” *The Intercept*. Cf. Interviews with Taylor, Brock., and Reyburn, Sarah.

status, rights, paychecks, and symbolic powers as public security agents. In their study of the global commercial security industry, for example, social and political scientists Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams document examples from across the Niger River delta, South Africa, and elsewhere showing how local and national policing personnel regularly supplement their salaries by explicitly offering their services *as* public police officers to transnational oil and mining companies operating in the region.⁷ And with respect to private security agents exercising putatively public policing functions, private business interests now regularly provide public institutions with security personnel, financing, and deep operational support to further what are nominally public security interests. The public-private distinction is at best perfunctory under these conditions and arrangements.

But why? Aren't security-sector fusions amenable to local, national, or international regulation? And even if not, why do they matter so much for the public-private distinction? We do not, for instance, usually conclude that increasing levels of privatization in areas such as health care, education, public services, and other domains will antique this jurisprudential cornerstone, so what is so special about trends in security governance such that they will, unlike these other areas, obviate the public-private distinction? I will spend Chapters 2, 3, and 4 answering that question, but just to prefigure my response, when viewed historically the public-private distinction itself emerged not just in tandem with changes to the social organization of coercive powers and authorities, but it was largely a result of those changes. The conceptual and practical valence of the public-private distinction, in other words, largely depends on a very specific historical configuration within the social structure of security governance; so, for the

⁷ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics*. 122-171.

latter to transmute in the present is, therefore, to uproot the very conditions for the possibility of this distinction. So that is at least one reason why security-sector fusions have a special relationship with the future of the public-private distinction.

As far as local, national, and international regulations go, security-sector fusions have a special relationship with liberal law that makes it all but impossible to meaningfully regulate them or place jurisprudential limits on their continual expansion. The legal scholar Amitai Etzioni, for instance, is more than skeptical that meaningful reforms are possible within the existing liberal legal order. *Qua* ‘private,’ the activities of non-state police and military actors are rigorously protected by liberal law from governmental scrutiny, intervention, and regulation, and this feature both allows liberal governments and private business interests to utilize non-state force actors to “bypass [constitutional] restraints on a very large scale by carrying out... activities that government itself is banned from undertaking” (279).⁸ As Etzioni’s legal review concludes, absent “a more profound re-conceptualization of the constitution and the rule of law”, it will be “impossible” for liberal states to effectively regulate and govern the affairs of non-state police and military actors and institutions either at home or abroad (p. 293). With respect to international regulations, there is again a similar dearth of regulatory language, and that’s to say nothing of the equally important matter of enforceability. The previously mentioned McFate, for instance, has surveyed the regulatory frameworks utilized by the United Nations and other international bodies and concluded that extant frameworks are “at once so broad and so specific that almost no one falls under their umbrella” (38).⁹ Therefore, the possibility that actually existing political and legal regimes might successfully curtail the proliferation of security-sector

⁸ Etzioni, Amitai. "Reining in private agents." *Minnesota Law Review*. 101:279.

⁹ McFate, Sean. *Modern Mercenary*. 38

fusions is such a remote possibility that virtually no one expects it regardless of whether it is desirable or not.¹⁰ One might as well whip the ocean for its waves.

To summarize, then, the reason why latter-day transitions toward security governance models predicated on ever increasing levels of security-sector fusions between state and non-state actors should uniquely deconstruct the public-private distinction while other industries touched by privatization trends do not, there are both historical and regulatory reasons for it. The details of this line of reasoning are complex and will require this dissertation to make them sound plausible. But for purposes of my introduction, I might briefly put it like this: on my reading of the development and evolution of the modern public-private distinction, this distinction was a consequence and not the cause of then novel methods for the social organization of coercive powers and authorities. Over time ‘we’ came to understand these methods through the lens of the public-private distinction, but in the story that I am telling this perspective is an outright anachronism. It is therefore extremely significant that in the 21st century, the methods and models of security governance which have long been affiliated with the liberal logic of the public-private distinction have been put into reverse, so to speak, by the widening phenomena of security-sector fusions. The public-private distinction took shape with respect to the use of force, and it loses shape with respect to the use of force.

In relation to the argument about nation-state entropy, what was formerly considered to be the very definition of the nation-state, “a human community which successfully claims a monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory,” as the German sociologist Max

¹⁰ Let markets be our guide here. The market for private force is very strong and expected to grow everywhere in the world, with some estimates claiming more than a 400% increase in market values over the next twenty years. Cf. McFate, Sean. *Modern Mercenary*. 151-156.

Weber famously put it in 1919 at a time when the nation-state system was still approaching its historical zenith, one hundred years later Weber's statement maintains limited accuracy. At best, it now only partially applies to the so-called strong states of the world; but in reference to the world's 'fragile states' it hardly applies at all. In fact, the United Nations itself today categorizes more than 60% of the world's extant political states as being at "high or very high risk" for collapse.¹¹ *That* is what is at stake; *that* is what this new hybridized system of normative political violence obliterates: the very grounds for a substantive distinction between public and private forms of coercive power and authority and the constituted grounds for such distinctions in the first place. Who are we, politically speaking, when these faiths and practices begin to go the way of the dodo? What happens as a result?

In relation to changing security governance paradigms, the loss of this faith entails the demise of the ideal of public say or oversight over the polity's 'vectoring' of political violence. It is unclear and could certainly be debated how much actual say or power over matters of intra- and extra-polity violence the *demos* has actually possessed throughout the histories of the nation-state system and modern liberal democracy, but nevertheless, the very idea that through representational politics the *demos* should maintain a degree of say over matters of intra- and extra-polity violence has at the very least long infused the spirit of liberal democracy. This same belief has also long motivated collective political action either in support of, or against, specific historical forms and actions of political violence. I do not mean to be tendentious here, but it is no coincidence, just to take a recent example, that the most privatized wars in US history, the early 21st century wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, also became some of the least publicly supported

¹¹ Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index*. 2023

wars in US history. In retrospect, however, it is difficult to imagine these and other iterations of citizen-led anti-war or anti-policing movements outside of a political imaginary constructed around the nation-state system and the public-private distinction. The same holds true, I think, for political candidates' promises to institutionalize greater oversight over the conduct of domestic policing, either in the form of body-cameras, referendums, or citizen-review boards, just to name a few exemplary cases.

Even certain revolutionary pathoses follow a similar logic, albeit a negative logic. Ward Churchill's moralizing hortatory is a paradigmatic case here.¹² For Churchill, the United States is a corrupt and genocidal regime, and the only way to challenge its hegemony is to engage in violent and immediate political revolution. You know, seize the state and that sort of thing. Churchill's exhortations toward political violence go further, too. If you are a pacifist, if you support non-violent political protest, or if you engage no resistance to state violence at all, then you are an imperial enabler. I will not comment on Churchill's arguments, but for purposes of this dissertation project what I will point out is that the unstated although obvious assumptions regarding the hierarchical structure of contemporary political power within this "genocidal" system can only produce the image of the ogre, not of the Hydra, and so he correspondingly believes in a specific form of political power that can at least in theory be contested, challenged, bombed, overthrown, seized, or whatever the best word is. Then, having accomplished his revolution, it will only the wicked and the recalcitrant that will need to be shot; and having shot them, dialectics would at long last come to an end! Oh, to have that faith! It makes everything so clean! In any case, *vis a vis* Churchill— and Churchill has many direct and indirect emulators, no

¹² Churchill, Ward and Ryan, Michael. *Pacifism as Pathology*.

doubt— my point is that soon as we begin to think in terms of the decline of the nation-state system and the collapse of the public-private distinction both incrementalist and revolutionary approaches to social change become increasingly complicated to the point of suffering conceptual shipwreck. What is a revolution—and I am only thinking of properly political revolutions— without a state against which to revolt?

There is a void, in other words, in state-centered critiques of power and theories of change. Whether they are Churchillian in spirit, or whether they take the form of the ‘long game,’ reformist thinkings sometimes fail to countenance the disappearance of liberalism in either is political or legal facades. And this, I think, is why we need the political philosophy of Wendy Brown, to whose writings I now turn. As Brown suggests in *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, traditional notions of popular sovereignty over matters of life and death now stand in an uncertain relationship with the evolving nature of political sovereignty.¹³ She begins with the observation that for many canonical philosophers, “the sovereignty of the political proceeds from its purview over the life-and-death matter of the friend-enemy relation... On the one hand, life is at stake, while on the other, there can be no norm to decide on or about the enemy. Nor is there just a missing rule or norm here... this decision is beyond the pale and rests outside of whatever norms bind the polity” (55).¹⁴ There is, to put it a little differently, a profound tension within modernist conceptualizations of sovereignty wherein sovereignty is “incoherently” split between “Schmittian decisionist power”— what Locke called the “prerogative powers of the monarch” — on the one hand, and representational politics, on the other. What this means is that the meaning of sovereignty is never fully ‘nailed down’ in modern political thought, and as a result, it only

¹³ Brown, Wendy. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*.

¹⁴ *Ibid*

appears and can express itself in the guise of a certain “shell game played by power” wherein “it is never simply held or wielded, but from the beginning must circulate— [it] works as currency and through currency” (57) just as it also begins to work in and through legislative divisions and decisions.¹⁵ But even as it begins to circulate, political power can, like the fruit of a mushroom, only materialize fully above its own circulation as the power to determine the content of the friend-enemy distinction. It can only become real and effective, in other words, in the form of a sovereign power that stands above, alongside, or outside of the identities and desires comprising it regardless of whether participants within such a system believe this sovereign function ultimately derives from the *vox populi* or from a more compressed figure or office *a la* Bodin, Hobbes, Hegel, and why not, even the American federalists.

But as Brown puts it, “there is no ‘sort of’ sovereignty just as there is no sort of God”, so even if modern political thought leaves indeterminate and unresolved any final answer to the question of how the sovereign position ought to be occupied, by whom or by what procedure, regardless of any specific answer to these questions a new sovereign space was nevertheless in actuality both imagined in theory and enacted in practice (50).¹⁶ So as nation-states and their normative political and legal structures begin to dissipate in the contemporary transition toward what Brown calls a “post-Westphalian” period of sovereignty, this new sovereign position remains functionally intact yet the scaffolding which had supported its construction, the legal and political structures of modernity, fall apart. States remain important political actors within their own rights and limits, and they continue to define and enforce various forms of political inclusion and exclusion, but for all of that, for Brown as well as for McFate and several other

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

thinkers I consider elsewhere in this project, nation-states therefore begin to cease to be the locus of political sovereignty. In short, sovereignty fractalizes.

On this reading of *Walled States*, Brown's notion of fractured sovereignty becomes especially useful for thinking through the social and political implications of security-sector fusions. To be sure, Brown herself does not make the connections, but they are there. To wit: even as the politically performative pressures and attempted interventions of the *demos* upon sovereignty continue, still the "Schmittian" element ever exceeds the possibilities and limits of representational politics. With respect to the use of force, this 'ever exceeds' means there will always be a gap between the powers of the government and the powers of the governed within liberal democracy. And if, as Brown further suggests, this Schmittian power to determine the content of the friend-enemy distinction persists across contingent political forms, liberal democracy included, then contemporary security-sector fusions may be said to intersect corrosively with modernist forms of political sovereignty. In effect, they represent the reallocation of the power to determine the content of the friend-enemy distinction to a new suite of political forms, structures, and players intersecting with, but not contained by, the nation-state system, even less so by the *demos* and the procedures of representational politics. Overall, as the nation-state system devolves, the power to determine the content of the friend-enemy distinction remains but spreads out, as it were.

And so it is. Across myriad political cartographies, hybridized security actors now actualize transient borders and *ad hoc* zones of (moral, economic, political, and religious) control. In that sense, they functionally duplicate the sovereign prerogative to determine the content of the friend-enemy distinction, but unlike political power in modernist theories of

sovereignty, which historically ossified as a hierarchical set of borders, identities, relations, administrative structures, and their accompanying policing and military alignments, post-modern security-sector fusions multiply and extend political sovereignties according to what the scholar of international business relations Anna Leander has called a “post-Fordist” model of social and economic organization.¹⁷ As Leander puts it, this model is comprised of “more diverse and horizontally linked complexes of actors” and it is fundamentally different from the hierarchical models of nation-state power (60).¹⁸ Similarly, security-sector fusions vector sovereign political violence in a manner altogether different from the monolithic constructions of the friend-enemy distinction(s) generated within and by the nation-state system. Sometimes, security-sector fusions cause or prevent political violence in line with nation-state interests, but sometimes they do so in contradiction to those same interests. And sometimes, they cause or prevent political violence outside of any clear relation to nation-state politics whatsoever.

Thus does the aforementioned Sean McFate, for instance, speak of sovereignty in the (post-Westphalian) era of security-sector fusions as “heteronomous,” as “a neo-medieval system of overlapping and inconsistent sovereignties” marked by “shifting authorities and allegiances” rather than as a geopolitical system defined by and through obdurate, formal structures of filiation and hierarchy (75).¹⁹ From this perspective, Brown is absolutely correct to link the inchoate and ineffectual walling off of political states from their mythological outsides to a deeper underlying political reality of waning sovereignty, but through an encounter with the trope of security-sector fusions such as this dissertation stages, I can productively reimagine her

¹⁷ Abrahamsen, Rita and Leander, Anna. *Introduction to Routledge Handbook of Private Security Studies*. 1-7.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ McFate, Sean. *Modern Mercenary*.

account of waning state sovereignty as at the same time implying emerging sovereignties. In other words, as political and economic pressures dis-member nation-states, rather than using the language of waning sovereignty, I believe it is equally productive to recast her efforts in terms of the proliferation of sovereignties, as sovereignties multiplying and becoming reborn, as *sparagmos*.

Can that language square with Brown's earlier qualification that "there can be no such thing as a 'sort of' sovereignty, just as there can be no such thing as 'sort of' God?" This question brings the concept of security-sector fusions and sovereignty even closer together, but this time, through the lens of economic circulation. During the same time period in which non-state security actors began their meteoric rise to a position of prominence on the scenes of domestic and international politics, the meaning and importance of the category of the economic non-coincidentally starts to supersede the category of the political. According to Brown, first the nation-state "is weakened and rivaled by other forces...[and] declining nation-state sovereignty then de-contains theological and economic powers" (62).²⁰ Next, as they become decoupled from values, identities, and political commitments, liberal-democratic or otherwise, these de-contained economic powers increasingly lose touch with traditional forms of sovereignty. Sovereignty in a traditional, political sense is now "no longer centered on the friend-enemy relation" (65), which also means that political states will "no longer dominate or order, but [will instead] react to the movements and imperatives of capital... the autonomy of the political constitutive of political sovereignty thus ceases to be an operative or convincing fiction" (67).²¹ On this account, even if particular economic policies enacted by legislators and other political figures become in the eyes

²⁰ Brown, Wendy. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*.

²¹ *Ibid*

of critics of state power strong evidence for racial, class, settler-colonial, and gendered bias—Brown herself makes a strong case for the gendered coding hidden within neoliberal accounts of freedom, for example—such evidences themselves do not reach to the same level as her deeper conclusions regarding the ways in which economic sovereignty ever more tightly circumscribes the range of actual decisionist possibilities *all* political programs must now confront. Modifying Nietzschean theodanatology, Brown finally summarizes these subtle dynamics and pressures and concludes, importantly, that “as capital, God is not dead, but rather finally de-anthropomorphized — finally God” (65-66).²² Capital now occupies the position of “theological wholeness” formerly held by the Christian divinity. It has become a form of extra-political sovereignty that is decoupled from traditional political life yet to which political life must now conform or perish.

From ‘Theological Wholeness’ to Security Sector Fusions:
The Divine Incarnation of Capital

Economic sovereignty as “theological wholeness” may comprise the contemporary character of capital, but sticking with Brown’s metaphors, how does sovereign capital become incarnate? How does it actually become effective in the fallen world of politics? Or, asking these questions a little differently, how does neo-sovereignty as theological wholeness manage to sublimate the paradoxical limits of modernist notions of sovereignty, which were for Brown incoherently split between decisionist and representational? I have no surprises here: in this section I illustrate security-sector fusions as the actualization of the theological wholeness of the economic; they stand for a plurality of neo-sovereign orderings which are themselves subservient

²² Ibid

to the remote God of the economic but which also exercise the will of this divinity in special way. The element of sovereignty that for Brown had the power to both exceed yet also construct contingent political structures and legalisms was, recall, the non-transferable power to determine the content of the friend-enemy distinction. Applying this idea to security-sector fusions, the latter actualize neo-sovereignty by generating novel political lamellae, by demarcating new political insides and outsides and new forms of inclusion and exclusion outside of the demarcations proffered by nation-states. In this manner, security-sector fusions, while still bound up with the sovereign expressions of the nation-state system, are no longer exclusively tied to that system. In a sentence, security-sector fusions actualize the imperative orderings of the divine economic.

Now that I have prefigured my view on how security-sector fusions relate to the evolution of sovereignty, in what remains of this section I now need to refine and support this view, which I will accomplish through a reading of another of Brown's texts, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*.²³ As I show, security-sector fusions are intimately connected to the themes Brown is addressing in this second text, and so in the following paragraphs I will be emphasizing her engagement with the themes of security, warfare, and policing in their relationships with neoliberalism to render my position visible. Not only will this reading help to clarify the points I've already made about the relationship between security-sector fusions and sovereignty in a 'post-Westphalian' era, it will also supply a missing piece of the sovereignty puzzle, so to speak, that is left ambiguous in Brown's own account of the rise of neoliberal reason. Briefly stated, that missing piece is a more grounded explanation of how

²³ Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. 2015

abstract neoliberal reason managed to succeed in becoming the dominant ordering principle within political affairs and beyond. My overarching goal in this chapter was to place my dissertation within a broader theoretical context; thus, not only will this reading of *Undoing the Demos* augment Brown's own account of the triumph of neoliberal reason, it will also doubly function to establish the relevance of this dissertation reading and writing project to contemporary theoretical discussions about the nature and expression of political power in the 21st century.

Beginning with a question, how do neoliberalism, neo-sovereignty, and security-sector fusions complement one another? What ties them together? In the security studies literature, neoliberalism is widely viewed as having produced security-sector fusions. Citing Leander again, contemporary security-sector reforms "went hand in hand with... the increasing role of neoliberal forms of governance... The related reorganization of the relationship between the state and the private sector is inconceivable without the growing dominance of neoliberal economic models and the neoliberal emphasis on privatization and the outsourcing of previously public goods and services" (3).²⁴ The aforementioned Abrahamsen and Williams likewise suggest that "it is impossible to understand the growth and pervasiveness of private security without considering the contemporary dominance of neoliberal modes of governance (60)."²⁵ And thinking in a similar direction, the philosophers Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou have also contemplated neoliberalism's ability to mobilize heterogenous practices of post-national securitization and gestured at how these new practices stochastically advance the creation of new

²⁴ Abrahamsen, Rita and Leander, Anna. *Introduction to Routledge Handbook of Private Security Studies*.

²⁵ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State. Private Security in International Politics*.

“threshold zones” (153), or new models of political inclusion and exclusion.²⁶ While these examples are few, they are widely paradigmatic for how many scholars view the relationship between neoliberalism and security-sector fusions.

There is, in short, some consensus around the idea that we cannot build an account of how neoliberalism relates to security-sector fusions, let alone an account of security-sector fusions’ social and political impacts, without first tarrying with neoliberalism beyond its usual connotations as a set of economic policies or practices. Returning to Brown’s work, while Leander, Abrahamsen and Williams, and Butler and Athanasiou are all spot on with regard to their shared recognition that neoliberalism is fatefully bound together with emerging security-sector reforms, since it is Brown who most trenchantly queries neoliberalism’s essence her work is the most promising for working out the deeper connections between changing security governance paradigms and neoliberalism. As already established in *Walled States*, the economic in the sense of theological wholeness now overdetermines the political and economic totalization ‘outdoes’ the paradoxical limits entailed in modernist philosophies of sovereignty. Thus, when we get to *Undoing the Demos*, ‘neoliberalism’ here begins to function as synecdoche for this new model of economic sovereignty. Therefore, in Brown’s thought neoliberalism is something far more sublime and important than merely a set of economic policies and practices. Instead, it signifies what Brown calls an emergent “normative order of reason” (2, 9).²⁷ As such, neoliberalism is the name for an epochal arrival that touches upon all aspects of individual and social life ranging from the dynamics of subject formation to the construction of individual and group desires. Most importantly, both for Brown’s purposes and my own, this emergent

²⁶ Butler, Judith. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political. Conversations with Athena Athanasiou.*

²⁷ Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos.*

normative order of reason operates upon the political imaginary in such a way as to negate the political values and aspirations formerly associated with pluralist liberal democracy and it thereby prepares the way for new ways of valuing and conceptualizing the ends of governance. Most of all, it recalibrates ideals around political purpose and belonging.

In these ways, neoliberalism gives birth to more than new economic practices, but to a novel anthropological figure. Following although modifying Foucault's language, Brown names this new anthropological figure *homo oeconomicus*. In contrast with (the prior figure of) *homo politicus*, "that creature animated by and for the realization of popular sovereignty as well as its own individual sovereignty, that creature who made the French and American Revolutions and whom the American constitution bears forth... (86-87)," *homo oeconomicus* is a political creature for whom pluralist politics on a state-centric liberal democratic model is as functionally incoherent as it is irrational.²⁸ Even if the moral and/or supererogatory value of large-scale political projects persists within the political imaginary alongside neoliberal reason, nonetheless the instrumental value of such projects and fidelities is put into question by the pressures of economic positioning. *Not* because this new anthropological figure articulates or champions some brand of alternative politics, although that certainly happens, but because the psychological structures and desires inculcated by neoliberal reason no longer produce political subjects who are motivated by the deep democratic longings and affects perquisite to the building and maintenance of large-scale pluralist political projects. In other words, *homo oeconomicus* may continue to pay lip service to and wholeheartedly believe in cosmopolitan principles, vote in democratic elections, debate public policies and political figures, or even also attempt site-

²⁸ Ibid

specific interventions into the errors or injustices germane to political life, yet for all of that neo-sovereignty in the wider economic sense Brown discloses will sharply delimit and define actual political *praxes* at both individual and collective levels. “Indeed,” Brown clarifies, “no capital, save a suicidal one, can freely choose its activities and life course... we are no longer creatures of moral autonomy, freedom, or equality... the construal of *homo oeconomicus* as human capital leaves behind not only *homo politicus*, but humanism itself” (41-42).²⁹ Get in line, play the game, or “go voluntarily to the mad house,” as Nietzsche put it.

Thus in her introduction to *Undoing the Demos* Brown takes as her point of departure not questions such as how do we reinvigorate democratic or cosmopolitan projects, but a rather different set of guiding questions:

What happens when the precepts and principles of democracy are remade by this order of [neoliberal] reason and governance? When the commitment to individual and collective self-rule and the institutions supporting it are overwhelmed and then displaced by the encomium to enhance capital value, competitive positioning, and credit ratings? What happens when the practices and principles of speech, deliberation, law, popular sovereignty, participation, education, public goods, and shared power entailed in the rule by the people are submitted to economization? (10)³⁰

As these questions reflect, Brown’s thought points toward the reimagining of political life rather than toward strategies for intervention meant to counter the forces she identifies. It is true that Brown expresses some hope that the clarity she brings to bear on the study of neoliberalism might allow readers to productively imagine political futures in which democratic longings remain possible, but that is outside of her efforts in the text proper (27-28).³¹ In a similar vein, my use of Brown’s text in the following paragraphs is not intended to furnish a suite of

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

interventionist strategies for changing the possible historical trajectories of security-sector fusions, but for coming to terms with their scope and scale. Toward that end, I return to this idea of there being a missing piece of the sovereignty puzzle within Brown's work.

As Brown's narration of the rise of *homo oeconomicus* builds, very early on there is a curious parenthetical exclusion that exempts from the text's overall logic a certain sphere of an-economic conduct that is singularly immune from the otherwise all-pervasive orderings of neoliberal neo-governmentality. This elision occurs in the context of her reflections on President Obama's February 2013 State of the Union address, where she writes, "in a neoliberal era when the market ostensibly takes care of itself, Obama's speech reveals government as both responsible for fostering economic health and as subsuming all other undertakings (except national security) to economic health" (26).³² I had to pause: why not national security? How does national security escape from neoliberalism and its "termite-like" tunnelling into every inner and out sphere of human conduct, up to and including the areas of subject-formation and the social-psychological structure of ratiocination itself (35)?³³ While Brown acknowledges that states' security functions, too, can be impacted by neoliberal economization, at no point throughout the remainder of this text does she elaborate as to why national security should be exempted from the historical draft of neoliberalism. So, even as she proceeds to explore the disassembly of nation-states by neoliberalism's gaunt hands, the question of the relationship between national security and neoliberalism stops there. By my lights, this leaves open two outstanding questions. First, why is the category of national security singularly immune from the

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

wider dynamics of economic totalization; and second, what happens to the concept of national security within the era of post-Westphalian geopolitics?

With respect to this first question, my immediate inclination was to explain away Brown's elision as her momentarily thinking about national security solely through the lens of the economic but in the narrower sense of specific economic policies and practices. I thought perhaps Brown omitted national security from the general logic of neoliberal transmogrification because of the oppositional relationship, long known to classical economic theorist, between economic expansion on the one hand and national security budgets, which devour such massive amounts of national wealth, on the other. To give a contemporary example, even if it is true that the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan generated nearly unfathomable profits for the numerous transnational business enterprises that were involved in the capitalization opportunities military occupation afforded them— Brown herself offers several examples of this — from a macroeconomic standpoint these wars contributed to rising income inequality in the US and beyond and significantly drained federal resources and coffers for decades to come, adding an estimated +\$8 trillion dollars per annum to federal debt obligations and with more than half of that debt servicing state obligations to the private business sector.³⁴ This example is consistent with Brown's larger points about neoliberalism's impacts on the public sector writ large, but it still does not fully explain why she excludes national security from the list of neoliberalism's impacts. Security expenditures, of course, can either enhance or hobble the economic vitality of states, but the deeper point Brown seems to be making is that national security and neoliberalism, even if they can be related, cannot be entirely conflated.

³⁴ Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University. 'Estimate of Post-9/11 US War Spending'

As for the second question, which was what happens to the concept of national security in a post-Westphalian era, an answer will depend on how we read the supervenience relation between neoliberalism and security governance paradigms. As Brown and others have argued, neoliberalism weakens the nation-state system, yet if such matters as policing and warfare are for Brown touchable by but ultimately recalcitrant to the project of neoliberal governance, it must be because the latter perennially depends on the former in a way that cannot be fully gotten around within the terms of Brown's account alone. In other words, although neoliberalism weakens the nation-state, it does not weaken the concept of security, only the concept of 'national' security. Why is that? Brown neither asks nor answers this question, but in connection with *Undoing the Demos*, Brown's occasional musing on the relationship between security governance structures and neoliberalism makes me wonder if there is perhaps an unacknowledged Hegelianism informing her approach to the study of *homo oeconomicus*.³⁵ On her account, the neoliberal project first attains power and prominence through a (rather Hegelian) combination of hard and soft power. She states, for example, that "neoliberal policy was first imposed abroad through fiat and force in the '70's and '80's, but neoliberalization in the Euro-Atlantic world today is more often enacted through specific techniques of governance, through best practices and legal tweaks, and in short, through soft power drawing on consensus and buy in rather than through violence, dictatorial command, or even overt political platforms" (35).³⁶ In effect, then, like the physicists' classification of energy as either kinetic or potential, for Brown hard and soft power function

³⁵ Hegel only appears in *Undoing the Demos* once, when Brown is considering the genders of *homo politicus* and *oeconomicus*. Given Brown's wider narrative, however, it is strange that she never discusses the master-slave parable in relation to either her discussions of the emerging neoliberal social order or in her comments on the relationship between neoliberalism and national security.

³⁶ Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos*.

both in tandem but sequentially such that the political power neoliberalism has recently acquired was ultimately developed along a single historical gradient of force. Thus, while Brown primarily “thinks with, against, and apart from Foucault,” when it comes to explaining the historical ascent of neoliberal reason, her account more strongly resembles the all-important master-slave parable first conceptualized in the *Phenomenology* than it does the category of the biopolitical.

To complete this thought, it is therefore doubly significant when Brown adds that “for neoliberals, economic competition is essential... and valuable, but not natural, [and] it must be continuously supported and corrected from the outside, and this need defines one of the crucial functions of the neoliberal state” (63).³⁷ Neoliberalism, in other words, must enter the liberal-democratic state from the outside, either through overt force, or by wearing the camouflage of soft power, but in both cases, neoliberalism must be supported and corrected from a position beyond the formal frameworks and political processes of the polity, or what in *Walled States* was the position held by the ‘Schmittean’ element. The question then becomes how exactly does neoliberalism manage to exist both within and outside of the various social and political transformations it engenders? In effect, Brown has staged neoliberalism as both the cart and the horse, so her account leaves open the question of how economic sovereignty works its way into social reality. Thus, my hypothesis as to why Brown has singled out national security from the general logic of economic totalization is that this exteriority by and through which economic sovereignty is maintained was itself first created by, and primarily constructed through, the historically shape-shifting structures of security governance. In other words, in Brown’s account

³⁷ Ibid

national security stands outside of the net effects of neoliberal transformation because the chronicle she provides of the dilapidation of state-centric political filiations requires this ‘outside position’ to sustain such devolutions. However, before the text ends she never returns to this outside position held by national security, so she is never fully able to articulate what might happen to this outside position after neoliberalism obviates the prefix ‘national.’ Therefore, when it comes to identifying the more exact mechanisms through which the sovereign status of the economic asserts itself against and ultimately displaces the liberal-democratic zeitgeist, all of the answers she returns are more properly effects rather than causes of a post-Westphalian geopolitical reality; and that is where security sector fusions come back into the picture.

This way of reading *Undoing the Demos* can also shift the readings provided by Leander, Abrahamson and Williams, and Butler and Athanasiou regarding the relationship between security-sector fusions and neoliberalism. From this modified perspective, security-sector fusions can be viewed as enabling neoliberal transformations rather than being caused by them. This way of thinking about changing social, political, moral, and economic realities, moreover, is highly consistent with other thinkers seeking to articulate, for different reasons, the links between political violence and political forms, legal frameworks, economic relations, and the pasts and futures of sociation. I am, in other words, far from the only person to theorize this idea of the ‘outside position’ and its importance for theories of macro-historical change, political or otherwise. I will not fully develop this point in my dissertation, but for the moment, I will only conclude that the thinking of the outside position is critical toward an understanding of and appreciation for the political possibilities implied through globalized processes of security-sector reformation.

To summarize, while I am not seeking to inappropriately fetishize political violence here, I am suggesting that a possible answer to the questions of (a) why neoliberalism appears in Brown's work as both intra- and extra-systemic and (b) why she pushes national security to the outside of *homo oeconomicus* without ever fully explaining this decision can both be resolved by adding to Brown's work the point that neoliberalism is an effect secondary to the evolution of security governance paradigms rather than the other way around. Just as sovereignty under *homo politicus* materialized in the form of the nation-state— a hierarchically unified judiciary, state prisons, police, the military, and so forth — theological wholeness as economic sovereignty could not and cannot become incarnate without a presence appropriate to the advent of a post-Westphalian geopolitics. To put it crudely, Brown's cart needs a horse.

In the end, these are the theoretical waters in which this project swims; thus, while on one level this dissertation carefully examines and documents changes within the social structure of security governance practices, on another level it is a theoretical work concerned with how today's changing security governance paradigms are actively altering the fabric of social and political life and shaping its futures. In that sense, it is a supplement to Brown's work and provides an additional site for contemplating emerging political futures.

Dissertation Outline

In bringing this introductory chapter to a close, I only have left to provide the reader with an outline of my arguments. In the first substantive chapter, *Chapter 2: the Deep(-er) History of Security Sector Fusions and Why it Matters Today*, I will leave behind the contemporary 'moment' and ground this project's core arguments in an historical context. There, I review historical and philosophical studies concerned with questions related to the social organization of

coercive powers and authorities and I strongly emphasizing that we cannot appreciate the scope and significance of recent, globalized transitions toward non-state policing and military models without first contextualizing them on a much longer historical timeline than the 21st century alone. Much of our present-day thinking around security ‘privatization’ is heavily contoured (and potentially biased) by the contingent histories of the nation-state systems and its associated legal logics, and that makes such historical and philosophical studies both crucial and revelatory. As I discuss in Chapter 2, force contracting models predate both the modern nation-state system and its intimately associated development of the public-private distinction. Historically speaking, modern nation-state militaries and public policing agencies are comparatively anomalous social configurations. With this thought in mind, I move to demonstrate how beginning in the late-medieval period and continuing until the early 20th century, non-state force actors strongly influenced the creation of the European nation-state system, and with it, the public-private distinction, and they eventually led the spread of these now-familiar legal and political coordinates to nearly every corner of the world through processes of colonization. I find that, almost ironically, non-state force actors pushed societies around the world to normalize public military and policing models and they led to the near-total demise of ‘private’ force actors’ political and economic powers and wider social legitimacy around the world.

This combined historical approach ultimately demonstrates a quasi-formal relationship between the contingent and ever-evolving structures of security governance on the one hand, and wider political conditions during any period of study, up to and including our own, on the other. Thus, when I continue my arguments in *Chapter 3: Whither the State? Contemporary Force Privatization Movements and the Public-Private Distinction*, I will be well-positioned to push a

more trenchant inquiry into the near- and long-term impacts of latter-day security-sector fusions than is possible when we focus on the 21st century alone. If past pre- and non-state security actors were integral to the dynamics of colonization and to the creation of the international system, as well as to the development of liberal law, then in the 21st century they now factor into widespread processes of nation-state deformation and a concomitant blurring of the political and legal lines separating public from private powers. In Chapter 3 my focus is on the latter idea, and correspondingly, I there consider numerous examples of contemporary security-sector hybridizations across local, national, and transnational contexts. But while these examples help me to demonstrate the ‘slippage’ of the public-private distinction, they do not explain how or why this slippage came about. Therefore, in addition to my examples, in Chapter 3 I also explain how and why these important changes within the social structure of security governance have come about via an etiology of contemporary security-sector fusions.

By tracing the origins and eclipse of the public-private distinction in the early decades of the 21st century, I will then be set for the final substantive chapter in this dissertation research and writing project. In my final substantive chapter, *Theorizing Security Sector Fusions as Nation-State Entropy*, I work out the consequences of security-sector fusions for the future of the nation-state system and I ask what sorts of newly emerging political forms or contours might follow as a result. If nation-states did not and could not have emerged until after European political actors had successfully enfolded a prior multiplicity of force actors and institutions into alignment with state bureaucracies and ideologies, and if the nation-state system could not have spread around the world, by hook or crook, until after European political actors had acquired administrative and military control over the vast terrestrial and oceanic territories, trade routes,

and markets this prior multiplicity of force actors formerly entered into and claimed for themselves, then what can it possibly mean for the future of the nation-state model and the international system for today's political actors to be massively reversing these dynamics? This, I think, is the proverbial million-dollar question, yet it is also where things become the most difficult as well as the most speculative.

On the one hand, there is an overwhelming abundance of empirical research into the dynamics of security-sector hybridizations. On the other hand, it is difficult to think comprehensively about what all of these examples might mean, for beyond the fact that no one possesses a crystal ball— although, I might add, artificial intelligence may be bringing us all closer to a Comptean social physics, but I digress— to whatever degree contemporary security governance structures resemble their historical antecedents, they are nevertheless ensconced in social and political contexts that are altogether novel, so it is unclear as to where this is all going. While it is easy enough to see that security-sector hybridizations deeply challenge a political imaginary constructed around a legal distinction between things public and things private, this alone is not obviously incongruent with familiar narrations of nation-state sovereignty. In other words, it is an entirely different order of theoretical magnitude to imagine what the longer-term consequences of latter-day developments in the social structure of security governance might mean for the theory and practice of sovereignty on a liberal-democratic model of governance. But as I said, I will be framing security-sector trends as actively even if unintentionally driving processes of nation-state entropy. New security governance structures, in other words, are actively spearheading new understandings and practices of political sovereignty across multiple global contexts. I construct my final argument accordingly:

First, I offer a review of theories concerned above all else with the putatively anti-democratic implications of security-sector hybridizations, and I analyze this class of theories as narratives of democratic perfectibility. To the extent these theories remain tethered to the public-private distinction and to 20th century models of nation-state sovereignty, however, to that same extent I find them hard pressed to cogently balance the empirical details of new security governance structures on the one hand with older political and legal paradigms on the other. As I proceed, I therefore suggest strategically bracketing democratic fidelities and their progressive narratives and instead I seek answers elsewhere. Confessedly, the loss here is non-trivial: there are affective and cognitive casualties involved in punting on commitments to ‘more democracy,’ however ambiguous such commitments might be; however, rather than seeing this strategic bracketing as a loss, I suggest reframing it as an opening through which to observe additional possibilities for reading the empirical details of contemporary force hybridization movements, and to potentially catch a glimpse of the possible political futures security-sector fusions portend.

Finally, I move to consider two recently developed approaches to the study of security-sector hybridizations which demonstrate a similar degree of ambivalence *vis a vis* liberal democratic fidelities. The first, offered by the international relations scholar Sean McFate, I refer to as ‘neomedieval theory’ (NT). NT posits that recent structural changes within global security governance structures might be said to function as both the chrysalis and the catalyst for the formation of novel political lamellae independently pursuing their own rational self-interests under intensifying conditions of political heteronomy. The second framework I utilize, global security assemblage theory’ (GSAT), was developed in tandem by the political scientists Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams. As they put it, global security assemblages are “new

security structures that are simultaneously public and private, global and local.... giving rise to new practices and forms of political power that cannot be neatly contained within the geographic boundaries of the nation-state system” (3).³⁸ Similar to NT’s attention to the role of non-state security actors in the genesis of novel political lamellae, GSAT likewise implicates contemporary force hybridization trends as responsible for the production of new political boundaries, systems, and relationships which do not square neatly with an international system constructed around notions such as nation-state sovereignty and/or identities.

Both NT and GSAT converge on a reading of contemporary force hybridization trends in which they are indices of socio-political flux on a grand scale and they guide the development of this dissertation beyond its empirical work toward a reconstructive politics that is more consistent with the exigencies of political heteronomy than with the normative expectations of the nation-state system. In tarrying with the category of the future possible, however, there are too many possible trajectories to consider within the confines of a single dissertation project. Therefore, rather than trying to imagine these futures in any detail, when I conclude Chapter 4 I will instead only state what I find unsatisfying about NT and GSAT even as I agree with their diagnoses and prognostications. As I suggest, they do not say enough about the differences between politicized identities and desires within the political futures they imagine; so when I conclude Chapter 4, I will also briefly touch upon Eve Tuck’s critique of assemblage theory and put this critique into conversation with NT and GSAT. This reflection will help me to illuminate the disappearance of the subject-position within these approaches to security-sector fusions, and it helps to pave the way toward my concluding chapter, Chapter 5.

³⁸ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*.

This final chapter is two things. First, it is simply a summary of this dissertation project and its main arguments, and second, it foregrounds at least one direction for study that I believe follows from the idea of a future geopolitics no longer centrally defined by liberal nation-states. When I end this project, I develop the significance of my project's conclusions for emancipatory projects in line with my discipline's scholarly emphasis on criticism and revolutionary praxis. If the sociologist Georg Simmel was right in suggesting that, as the intellectual historian Donald Levine put it, conflict and unity are "held together in perpetual tension as the source of the dialectical development or replacement of social structures and cultural forms throughout history," then regardless of the contents of emancipatory ideals the inter- and intra-group dynamics of super- and sub-ordination will mediate unfolding processes of political deconstruction and reconstruction and they will produce heteronomous political configurations some of which are congruent with, but others anathema to, the aspirations of the emancipatory imaginary (xxxix).³⁹ Thus, my final goal in the conclusion is to lay the groundwork for a future study of the theory and practice of emancipatory politics within a more politically heteronomous order.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE DEEP(-ER) HISTORY OF SECURITY SECTOR FUSIONS

AND WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Chapter Introduction

This chapter dives into the deep history of force contracting models and methods. There are many good reasons to reflect on this specific history before wrestling with the social and political impacts of contemporary security sector fusions, but the best of them can be gotten at by recalling a small but not insignificant detail crisply articulated by the historian Benjamin Carvalho. In thinking about the idea of force ‘privatization,’ Carvalho reminds us that “the concept of private force is unthinkable without the concept of the state” (11).¹ And of course, Carvalho is not just talking about any kind of state, but more specifically about those political states in which the public-private distinction has already become intelligible, which are modern liberal states. It was, in other words, the social organization of coercive powers and authorities under the auspices of the nation-state system and the public-private distinction that generated the discursive space within which any contrasts between private and public powers and authorities first became meaningful. How does this detail factor into the reading of contemporary security sector fusions? At a minimum, it means that on a long enough timeline a distinction between public and private variants of force is only of relatively recent vintage. No matter how obvious this fact is, if we take it for granted, the consequence will be reading contemporary security-

¹ Carvalho, Benjamin de. *Private Force and the Making of States, c. 1100-1500*.

sector fusions within a framework defined and limited in advance by the terms of the public-private distinction and the nation-state system. This is not necessarily a problem, but from this point of view, we can only read today's security governance structures and practices as normative aberrations or even violations of the way things must 'normally' be. Again, this is not always a problem, but it can become a heuristic limit.

Rather than reading the history of today's policing and military powers solely through the lenses of the public-private distinction and the nation-state system, therefore, in the main body of this chapter I construct a historical survey centered around the broader category of changes over time within the social structure of force contracting models and methods. This category allows me to avoid awkwardly trying to read today's security-sector fusions solely in terms of the contingent political and legal logics (I claim in this dissertation) they actively dissolve; but more toward present purposes, it facilitates the development of my main arguments in this chapter. Changing force contracting practices, I contend, should be counted among the most important factors responsible for the development of the public-private distinction and the nation-state system. When we look closely at the details behind this process, we will find a strong correlation between, on the one hand, changes to the social structure of security governance and, on the other hand, changing political and legal structures. But if this argument perhaps at first seems obvious or trivial, I want to suggest that it actually matters a great deal for how we read today's security-sector fusions. Just why this is so, why this 'obvious' argument matters, it is the business of the next two chapters to unpack; however, to foreground its significance, a provisional hypothetical will suffice. If it is true that changing security governance paradigms evince a strong correlation with changing political forms during any period of study, then the

reinvention of security governance paradigms in the 21st century indicates a transvaluation of the political and legal logics formerly associated with modernity's defining security governance structures, nation-state militaries and public policing institutions. In short, what I am suggesting is that where goes security governance, so too goes law and politics.

As for how I plan to build my argument, the first thing to note is that this chapter is primarily a historical inquiry. In it, I am above all else concerned to demonstrate how the general history of political and legal modernity is inseparable from the evolution of security governance paradigms. Correspondingly, in §2 I first paint a broad picture of what force contracting practices looked like long before the development of modernity's legal and political systems. While the main idea behind this section is to foreground the relative strangeness of nation-state militaries and public policing forces, it also allows me to present a cursory reading of certain benchmark political, philosophical, and economic texts which are customarily associated with the theoretical development of modernity's central political and legal logics. As I suggest, these texts can be thought of as collective responses to a more fundamental political question about how societies ought to organize, structure, and direct their coercive powers and authorities, a question that is still very much with us today and which also looms largely over this dissertation as a whole. This general description aside, in the next section, §3, I begin the empirical work of tracing the genealogy of the modern public-private distinction and the nation-state system alongside the social development of security governance paradigms in earnest. The history I narrate begins in the medieval European context, but in the next section, §4, it expands beyond the borders of "that tiny, insignificant peninsula of Asia," as Nietzsche called Europe, to include a story about how force contracting practices unfolded in the colonial context. In combination, these two

sections help me to explain the development and spread of modernity's key political and legal logics as a function of changing force contracting practices, and ultimately, they set up my approach to contemporary security sector fusions in the next chapter.

However, since the history of force contracting models is beyond ancient— I'll get to that in a footnote later on— it is not immediately clear which historical periods should be sampled to develop this argument. Some scholars and journalists prefer to restrict their historical analyses of security-sector fusions to the more recent past, going back at most to the mid-20th century, for instance, to frame their inquiries. I am not opposed to that decision— I suppose one selects different starting points for different reasons— yet at the same time I also believe a longer historical timeline is required for making sense of the current scope and significance of security-sector hybridizations. Therefore, in addition to the history I narrate in the main body of this chapter, I also include add a methodological discussion centered on the question of how much or how little of the historical record needs to be considered when thinking about this subject. Through engagement with Zaynab Quadri's 2022 *American Quarterly* article 'War is Still a Racket: US Imperialism, Private Military Contracting, and the Iraq War,' in §5 I show what the extended historical framing I stage in this chapter adds to the subject of contemporary security-sector fusions.² As for why this discussion is helpful toward my main arguments in this dissertation, I will explain myself in due course.

² Quadri, Zaynab. *War Is Still a Racket*

A Frame Flipped on its Head: PMCs as Rule, Not as Aberration

As suggested, policing and military contracting services are very far from novel institutional arrangements. They predate modern legal distinctions between public and private aspects of individual or social experience or categorization, and they likewise pre-date the genesis of the modern nation-state system and the international system as we generally think of it today, as rather literally comprised of relationships between nation-states. When viewed on a long enough timeline, in fact, force contracting arrangements reach as far back as the earliest political states of the world, and probably earlier, too.³ Thus, what first comes to light after we have shifted the historical frame we place around the study contemporary PMCs (or other forms of ‘private’ force) is that they are, as it is nicely put by the international relations scholar Sean McFate, more a “re-emergence” than anything else. “For at least three thousand years,” McFate clarifies, “private military force has been a feature— and often the major feature— of warfare... hiring private armies was how warfare was usually fought” (28).⁴ Within a wider historical frame, in other words, the conceptualization of ‘private’ military contractors, and perhaps even more importantly, critical antipathies toward them, in truth belong to a constellation of

³ As drawn from multiple sources, King Shulgi of Ur, for example, primarily relied on hiring mercenary warriors from beyond the territorial limits of the kingdom to wage its wars of expansion. Xenophon’s *Anabasis* tells the story of the return the mercenary army of the 10,000 to Hellas after Cyrus the Younger’s unsuccessful attempt to unseat the Persian emperor Artaxerxes II. Alexander’s famous military campaigns were only possible because of the abundant availability of for-hire armies scattered about the ancient world. Some three centuries later, Caesar’s Gallic campaigns utilized the same strategy. When William the Conqueror invaded Britain, he equally depended on soldiers-for-hire rather than anything resembling a modern state military. In terms of policing and security guarding, the Byzantine emperors routinely hired Norse raiders to provide them and members of the royal court with personal security guarding services. Likewise, the Mamluk dynasty maintained its rule over different populations by importing mercenaries from around the world to police the populations they claimed as their subjects. While this list is far from comprehensive, it sufficiently indicates the deep historicity of practices of military and security contracting as well as shows their historical continuity as instruments of governmentality across eras, political regimes, and cultures.

⁴ McFate, Sean. *Modern Mercenary*.

conceptual coordinates that were only very recently created, cultivated, and nearly naturalized. If not for the relatively recent double-advent of the nation-state system and the public-private distinction in law and politics, the core idea of ‘private’ military contractors would either be unintelligible or redundant.

A few preliminary remarks on the salient if also generalized differences between pre-modern and modern political life brings this idea into sharper focus. In reference to medieval political reality, for instance, McFate furnishes a long list of examples— for economy of words, I will not repeat them— illustrating how “the medieval notion of sovereignty [was] fractured... Popes, emperors, kings, bishops, nobles, city-states, monastic orders, chivalric orders, and vassals frequently made conflicting and concurrent claims to the same parcel of land and most of the people on it” (63).⁵ Thus, while the idea of a ‘public’ sphere would not have been completely alien to a medieval audience, however it was imagined it was a social field punctuated by numerous claimants to political authority, inconsistent legal regimes, and overlapping bureaucracies.⁶ It was, therefore, very different from the political and legal contiguities characteristic of the modern nation-state system, which hold together a network of juridical apparatuses themselves hierarchically organized under a monolithic system of formal authorities, jurisdictions, boundaries, and rights, and all within a singular political state. And in parallel, while the a-/opposite notion of a private sphere likewise would have found at least some traction before a medieval audience, the development of political modernity is fundamentally a story

⁵ Ibid

⁶ I do not consider it here, but certainly the division between public and private spheres long predates the medieval world. Greek and Roman civilizations were replete with examples of richly articulated legal and political codes related to this distinction. Additionally, every society navigates these more or less universal dimensions of human experience in culturally specific ways.

about rising levels of ‘private’ religious, legal, political, and economic power. There are two key logics at play here, therefore. One goes toward the fashioning of modern political and juridical apparatuses, identities, and affects, and the other runs toward greater autonomy for private actors in relation to religious authorities and political states.

In terms of political, economic, and philosophical thought, three signposts along this path might include William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government*, and Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*. Blackstone’s text, published in 1765, stands out for carefully staking out the jurisprudential boundaries between public and private conduct and authority, and it specifies the distribution of rights and obligations within this framework. Blackstone’s sprawling commentaries consciously presupposed the “absolute rights of individuals and things,” and they strongly opposed earlier, although by then mostly decrepit, political theories regarding the absolute rights of the sovereign as defended by earlier figures such as Hobbes and Bodin. In another well-told story, the 17th century philosopher John Locke offered similar arguments in *Two Treatises of Government*. Unlike Blackstone, who looked to the empirical history of the British Isles to explain the origins of liberal law, Locke turned to Christian mythology to locate the justificatory basis for secondary beliefs about the naturalness of both the public-private distinction and the inalienability of certain individual rights, and to ground further ideas regarding the foundations and limits of governmentality. In Locke’s view, governments exist to preserve, coordinate, and protect private interests, and any failure to do so lends to the *demos* rights to political revolution. And when Adam Smith published the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, similar political and legal logics were present. Following a comment shared by the political philosopher Wendy Brown, the *Wealth of Nations* is

important not just because it criticized mercantilist notions of state-directed trade practices, but more importantly, because it viewed the enhanced economic sovereignty of private individuals and businesses as essentially a public good. What Smith called “commercial society” exists, in other words, to preserve and augment the public good via the private sector. Therefore, while a deeper reading of these texts either alone or in comparison with each other would likely uncover any number of nuances or clarifications regarding what they are all ‘really’ about, my cursory reading suggests that the connecting thread among them is that they each refer back, in one way or another, to a fundamental question about the social organization of coercive powers and authorities.

In any case, whether that is the best way to frame the origins of political modernity is immaterial to the empirical fact that these now familiar philosophical, legal, and economic theories eventually swept across continental Europe and, through colonization, much of the world. On the one hand, these trends increasingly solidified the public domain as a theoretical and practical singularity and forged its immense symbolic-affective significance. On the other hand, they also constructed a similarly sacrosanct status for the private sphere. However—and this is crucial— with very few exceptions, and roughly speaking, between the mid-17th and the mid-19th centuries, at least two rights were gradually even if in actuality never completely transferred from the private domain into the hands of political states: the right to wage war, and the right to coercive policing. This is not to say, of course, that the public-private distinction emerged at some decisive point, Athena-like and fully formed as the goddess of state-defensive violence, as a result of this developmental history, but it is to say that before this defined time period, no such reallocation of coercive powers and authorities could have taken place. So even

if the social organization of military and policing powers during the modern era regularly transgressed any theoretically solid lines between public and private aspects of coercive power and authority, as I show in the next section these transgressions became fewer and fewer over time. In other words, there is an inverse relationship between the rise of nation-state militaries and public policing institutions on the one hand and decreasing security privatization on the other.

Prior to modernity, myriad force contracting practices existed and they permitted a multiplicity of social actors to engage in military and policing activities across eras, geographies, and political forms, but the gradual consolidation of European political states and the development of liberal democracies across geographic contexts in every case firmly corresponds with the centralization of war-making and policing authorities and powers, and it caused a decrease in the number of individuals or institutions who were able to legitimately and independently conduct military campaigns or policing activities on their own. Beyond this general description of the differences between modern and pre-modern variants within the general history of the social organization of coercive powers and authorities, in the next two sections I will provide a detailed picture of how and why states sought to, and succeeded in, attaining what Max Weber once called their “monopoly over the rights and means to legitimate violence.” First, I concentrate on the dynamics of force consolidation in the European context, and then I consider these dynamics across colonial topographies. Together, these narratives demonstrate the centrality of changing force contracting models to the development of the modern nation-state system and the public-private distinction, and looking ahead, they will help

me foreground my readings of the significance of changing security governance paradigms in the present.

Nation-State Formations, the Public-Private Distinction,
and Security Governance

Nation-states and the public-private distinction only came into existence via a dynamic series of interactions between political actors and non-state military and policing service providers. Until very recently in history, they usually kept quite separate. In *Private Force and the Making of States, c. 1100-1500*, Benjamin de Carvalho highlights the ideological inadequacy of the public-private distinction for making sense of this dynamic history and argues instead that we cannot appreciate contemporary PMCs or other forms of ‘private’ force until we get first get clear on how “the distinction between public and private force first emerges with respect to the use of force in conjunction with the long rise of the state in Europe” (11).⁷ Starting from this conceptual point, Carvalho proceeds to richly describe how efforts at political consolidation within the medieval European context were frequent although also routinely frustrated by ceaseless waves of military conflict. By the end of the 13th century, however, the scales began to tip in favor of augmented political controls over the use of force. As Carvalho illustrates, the frequency of pillaging and banditry pushed otherwise reluctant political and religious figures to develop shared mechanisms for control over these ‘illegitimate’ forms of violence, so even though a patchwork of “overlapping and inconsistent sovereignties” as McFate dubbed them remained the order of the day, nonetheless political and religious leaders were also discovering the necessity and benefits of inter-polity coordination. During these same centuries, the crusades

⁷ Carvalho, Benjamin De. *Private Force and the Making of States, c. 1100-1500*.

unfolded as well. Its military campaigns likewise required greater levels of political and military coordination among European political powers. But at the same time, they also made war-making and military supply and transport among the most profitable of medieval European enterprises. Thus, even as banditry and the crusades catalyzed lumbering processes of inter-polity cooperation, at the same time they also radically accelerated the enrichment and proliferation of for-hire armies. So much so, it turns out, that the latter and the industries which supported them now became stronger than the burgeoning political states of Europe.

Retrospectively, it is easy to see how these political and military developments were rife with the potential for conflict as emerging centers of political and economic power suddenly found themselves in complex negotiation and competition not only with each other, but also with the increasingly wealthy military service and supply companies sprouting up around them as well. From roughly the 13th century into the 1500's, while as before Europe continued to experience waves of warfare, pillaging, and political maneuvering, since state militaries were non-existent at this time transnational military companies came to stand at the center of these complex dynamics. European populations of the era witnessed, for example, the rise of the infamous and free companies of the northern Italian renaissance, the *condottieri*, and numerous other highly organized military companies, originating from nearly every corner of continent and beyond, too. Like today's transnational military service companies, they were replete with transnational ranks, demonstrated well-articulated chains of command, and maintained complex logistical support networks. But most importantly, they were also thoroughly beholden to political rulers or ideologies except in so far as their financing depended on them. Consequently their fealties, save the accumulation of greater wealth, were rather fluid.

The military career of the English mercenary captain Sir John Hawkwood (1323-1394) is paradigmatic here. After having fought for the English crown during the 100 Years' War, Hawkwood emerged as the captain of one of the largest mercenary companies of the day, the so-called White Company. Under Hawkwood's command, the White Company became notorious for among other things repeatedly switching sides during military campaigns and for playing opposing political leaders off of one another to increase their revenues. Hawkwood also enriched his forces by sacking cities, but not just cities he had been hired to attack, but cities the White Company had been hired to defend. Additionally, it was also not unusual for the White Company to demand tribute from cities and towns falling along their campaign path. If a city refused, Hawkwood's forces could simply make a detour and attack it first before moving on. So, besides being a cautionary tale about the dangers political states can face when they rely too heavily on mercenaries, this example nicely shows how during the late medieval period military companies were a massive thorn in the side of political players even as they depended on military companies to achieve their security objectives.

In turn, however, the very unreliability of military companies also forced European political players to seek stronger mechanisms of control over the means of war and the conduct of international diplomacy, a tension which sets the stage for the penultimate era in Carvalho's study. For all of the chaos created by mercenary-led warfare, by the end of the 15th century constant military engagements had lowered the number of political players realistically vying for sovereignty over local and regional enclaves. As a result, numerous "smaller barons" were forced into alignment with the more powerful political figures emerging around them (16).⁸ According

⁸ Ibid

to Carvalho, this process yielded a domino effect in which political figures could now hire ever larger and better equipped mercenary armies. The richer they became, the larger the armies they could afford. By the same token, as military companies grew in scale and quality, they increasingly found greater economic interest in more predictably assisting their wealthier patrons than challenging them. But this domino effect also placed political courts into something of a bind. Monarchs knew they were still absolutely dependent upon mercenary armies for the conduct of warfare (and as we shall soon see, too, for the growth of colonial revenues), but they also knew that by continuously financing military companies the latter were becoming wealthier and more powerful alongside them. Of note, this dilemma then gave birth to the first pre-modern equivalents to professional standing armies as political rulers, who were now themselves wealthy enough to afford it, began to experiment with fielding permanent, professional standing armies as a way to supplement the default mercenary option.⁹ While these proto-state armies remained far more attached to courts and specific personages than to political states in any modern sense, and even if they were and would for some time much smaller in comparison with the many for-hire mercenary companies around them, nevertheless their feasibility of professional standing armies at least established.¹⁰

These small but significant steps toward the development of professional standing armies had meaningful systemic effects. In the late 15th century, Carvalho traces, the lines between state and mercenary forces began to blur as in-service mercenaries became increasingly attached to their political patrons on symbolic, bureaucratic, and legal levels. On a symbolic level, political leaders started to require mercenary companies to dress in standardized military uniforms so that

⁹ Here, and throughout this section, I am summarizing historical processes more richly articulated by Carvalho.

it was clear to all to whom they owed their allegiances. Bureaucratically speaking, political rulers began to administer payments to mercenary companies through third parties and court bureaucracies rather than through the prior practice of paying lump sums directly to mercenary captains, who would then distribute payments to their forces as they saw fit. Practically speaking, this ensured that payments could only be received by persons able to document official ‘princely sanction.’ And finally, on a legal level, in the event that a contract dispute erupted between a mercenary leader and a political ruler, or between a rank-and-file soldiers and a superior, this same ‘princely sanction’ was becoming necessary for anyone to hold legal standing within the burgeoning court systems of the era. Putting this all together, whereas previously mercenary armies had functioned largely independently from their patrons, in the long run heightening degrees of imbrication between mercenary outfits and their political patrons reconfigured their ancient relationship in such a way that the latter now began to outpace the former in terms of the balance of power between them. If not for this gradual shift, the fundamental dilemmas of modern political philosophy regarding the location and limits of sovereign political power would have been something else entirely.

But future philosophical quandaries aside, for McFate it was the 30 Years War and the subsequent Peace of Westphalia that together mark the beginning of the end of large-scale mercenary warfare on the European continent.¹¹ When the Thirty Years War began in 1618, for all of the political, religious, and dynastic factions immersed in this gruesome conflict practically speaking there were still no official, standing state armies large enough to significantly influence its course of events. Even though mercenary contingents had by the beginning of the 17th century

¹¹ McFate, Sean. *Modern Mercenary*. 27-38

become more integrated into official state bureaucracies than at any previous juncture, and even though they were therefore more likely to at least remain loyal to their political patrons' than were their earlier medieval counterparts, nevertheless mercenary companies could still prove extremely difficult to command and control. As McFate also discusses, throughout the 30 Years War it was still rather common for mercenary armies to ignore or modify their patrons' missives, and to intentionally extend their time in the field so as to increase revenues.

Relatedly, even though European courts had become wealthier and now possessed greater degrees of control over their *ad hoc* military forces, this economic power itself contributed to the unruliness of mercenary contingents. Increased revenues enabled states to mobilize larger and larger mercenary contingents and to more easily replenish casualties, but as a result hundreds of thousands of fortune seekers flocked to European courts in search of economic benefit, and this only resulted in larger, more destructive armies which then created nearly unprecedented levels of destruction.^{12,13} No wonder, then, that once the treaties of Osnabruck and Munster formally ended hostilities in 1648 European monarchs immediately began working to establish professional standing armies above and beyond their previous smaller-scale experiments. Therefore, while it is not the case that following the Thirty Years War professional standing armies took shape overnight—state armies would continue to blend with large mercenary contingents well into the 19th and in a few isolated cases even into the early 20th centuries—it is nonetheless true that the destruction and chaos produced within this conflict gave rise to new political and economic calculations which ultimately led political courts to believe that by

¹² Ibid. 50-60.

¹³ One might recall here Hans Jakob Christoffel Gimmelshausen's *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1668).

financing permanent, professional armies, they would likely produce greater social, political, and economic stability for themselves and their subjects.

Lastly, if the Peace of Westphalia marks the beginning of the end of large-scale mercenary warfare within the terrestrial European context, then post-revolutionary France under Napoleon represents its conclusion. Under Napoleon, that “atavistic reemergence of the ancient world from within the heart of modernity,” as Nietzsche described him, the first *en masse* citizen levies took place so that state military forces could now be counted in the hundreds of thousands and not ‘just’ in the tens of thousands. Here, I want to pause to mention that it was not only technological advances such as modern musketry nor the continued deepening of state coffers which made these and other future mass conscription events politically possible, it was above all else the ideological edifices that took shape during the transition from the late medieval into the modern era that obviated the widespread use of mercenaries across Europe and western Eurasia and that made such mass conscription events possible. More exactly, it was the rise of nationalism that forged new affective links between individual identities and political states. By creating formal and supererogatory pressures within societies toward national duty, nationalism helped to quash individual ambitions for military service in mercenary companies and it led people to view mercenary companies as enemies of the public interest. One larger lesson here is that the historical coupling of nation-state power to emancipatory ideologies via ideological sutures such as ‘*liberté, égalité, fraternité*’ and ‘we the people,’ just to take two examples, was, it turns out, remarkably effective at building new forms of collective identity and belonging. These ideals allowed forming nation-states to mobilize ever larger military forces beneath a single banner, both literally and figuratively, and to justify everything from political revolutions to

overseas military adventures for centuries to come. In relation to this dissertation project, the historical coupling of emancipatory rhetorics to national fidelities ultimately generated powerful antipathies toward mercenaryism as a quintessentially unpatriotic or selfish enterprise.¹⁴ The aforementioned slogans, it turns out, were comparatively better at convincing people to shoot at one another than pecuniary recompense alone.

Following the Napoleonic Wars, mercenary armies all but disappeared across the European terrestrial context. In 1829, France became the first modern political state to formally outlaw non-state military actors from acting within its continental borders. Soon after, political states across Europe began to do the same. For example, in 1859 the British government mobilized its last officially state-sanctioned mercenary army for service in the Crimean war, although it never actually deployed. The solidification of the modern nation-state system as well as the genesis of the modern public-private distinction, therefore, both non-coincidentally transect the foundations and development of what we usually think of today as ‘public’ military forces. With respect to the main argument of this chapter, this history illuminates how nation-states and liberal legal frameworks both took shape with respect to, and largely as a consequence of, a once novel development within the social reorganization of coercive powers and authorities. The modern nation-state, the public-private distinction, and the formation of ‘public’ force actors, in other words, are thoroughly connected histories, both then and now.

¹⁴ Indeed, as McFate argues, the negative appraisals of non-state force actors that took hold in the European imagination in the wake of the Napoleonic era strongly persist into the present, so much so that, whether consciously or not, they continue to inform many scholarly and public reactions to security and military privatization movements today, skewing them toward reflexive condemnations and “inflammatory” interpretations. For example, through a comparative analysis of global reactions to the massacres at Nissour Square in 2007 and at Haditha in 2005— the former was carried out by private security contractors affiliated with the Blackwater company, and the latter by US marines— McFate finds that public reactions were very different across these two cases. Global publics overwhelmingly condemned the actions of Blackwater employees, but many either ignored or sought to justify the actions of the US marines as a textbook case of the ‘fog of war.’ Cf. McFate, Sean. *Modern Mercenary*. 61-65

Security Governance and Colonial Dynamics

But while this history helps me to explain the origins of political and legal modernity via reference to the terrestrial European context, it does not yet explain how, why, or when modernity's political and legal forms became globally normative. There is, in other words, a second branch to the history of pre- and non-state force actors that also needs to be considered before I turn to the contemporary period in the next chapter. In brief, this second branch involves the roles of non-state force actors within the larger, longer historical dynamics of colonization. As I discuss, this history is especially important to consider because it was in large part because of the wealth generated by colonial projects that political actors back in Europe were able to begin to tip the balance of power between them and mercenary companies in their favor. To put it bluntly, absent the influxes of wealth, resources, and slaves which European and, later, American governments acquired through colonial enterprises, it is inconceivable modern nation-state projects, and within them the public-private distinction, could have either germinated or succeeded. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to generally describe how force contracting models across various colonial contexts evolved, and to explain how that evolution contributed to the formation of modernity's key political legal logics and their spread around the world.

As most of the surface of the Earth is water, before getting to the shores of Africa, Asia, and the Americas a better place to start unpacking these dynamics is on the high seas. In *Private Force and the Making of the International System*, maritime historian Halvard Leira attends to the influence of non-state naval actors such as pirates, corsairs, privateers, and other for-hire maritime forces on processes of European nation-state formations and argues that the constant pressures exerted by non-state naval forces upon European political circles "forcibly tied

[European courts] together... into an embryonic system... [of] slave-raiding, alliance-building, treaty-making, and the exchange of protection money” (32).¹⁵ In other words, even as European courts engaged in military conflicts with one another, they also found it necessary to build systems of communication and cooperation in order to jointly respond to challenges presented by the numerous, unaffiliated maritime forces which were then ubiquitous. In that sense, waterborne mercenaries, pirates, and chartered navies were not “parasitic” upon emerging political states, but “one of the central productive forces in the gradual emergence of the international system... [in that] private maritime force mattered for the spread and development of international law as well as the global codification of regulations of force and the normative prerogatives of allegedly sovereign [European] states” (35).¹⁶ Thus, just as banditry, pillaging, and the crusades in the terrestrial European context formerly contributed to the growth of inter-polity communication, mercenary maritime forces produced a similar effect.

With respect to colonial formations, although European (proto-)states had a hand in financing and legitimizing colonial ventures abroad, and although they derived tremendous economic benefit from such expeditions, nevertheless it remains true that European colonial ventures abroad were initially spearheaded by non-state force actors. As the historian Andrew Phillips reminds us, the state was not the fundamental optic through which non-European peoples viewed colonial expansions.¹⁷ From this standpoint, although colonization was initially organized by private business enterprises to produce profits for themselves and political patrons, for-hire military service providers were the true tip of the spear of European colonization, and as

¹⁵ Leira, Halvard. *Private Force and the Making of the International System*.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Phillips, Andrew. *Company Sovereigns, Private Violence, and Colonialism*.

such, they and their patrons and not European courts were the first architects and executors of subsequent colonial dynamics. For this reason, not only is the history of force contracting practices critical for understanding the genesis of modernity's political and legal logics, but it is also absolutely essential for understanding global colonial histories and their legacies.

In both regards, Phillips' writings on the history of "company sovereigns" is especially instructive. In *Company Sovereigns, Private Violence, and Colonialism*, Phillips investigates relationships between early European colonists and their respective countries of origin and traces instances of both cooperation and conflict between them. At the center of Phillips' account are the titular "company sovereigns," "constituted hybrid polity forms which combined the governance functions characteristic of the sovereign state with the profit-maximizing motivations of the private corporation" (40).¹⁸ These hybrid polities typically contained independent court systems, collected tax revenues, conducted international diplomacy and, via contracted military and policing service providers, engaged in military struggles against each other and against local and foreign governments and populations. This is not to say that company sovereigns formed perfectly autonomous enclaves since they at least initially depended on both the economic investments provided to them by their wealthy patrons within European courts as well as the cultural and symbolic powers afforded to them by sovereign charters, but all the same "far from developing solely as a contrivance of kings, the early company sovereigns more often emerged at the initiative of powerful subjects who sought rulers' imprimatur to pursue profit-oriented enterprises" (46) rather than as a consequence of 'official' political direction.¹⁹ Furthermore, since early company sovereigns functioned within historical and geographical contexts that made

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

it practically impossible for European monarchs to closely monitor or manage their affairs, the majority of their interactions with non-European peoples were not scripted in detail from afar but were the products of a differential set of *ad hoc* calculations. For these reasons, while company sovereigns certainly carried European mental models with them such as racial formations and other ideological, political, religious, or other beliefs, they and not European political courts were the primary architects for subsequent colonial dynamics around the world.

More theoretically, another valuable lesson Phillips derives from the history of company sovereigns is that political power ‘travels’ best when delegated rather than directed. Colonization certainly supported European political powers and greatly deepened their coffers, but not because they asserted their political authority directly but because they divided it and granted it to others. As Phillips puts it, “company sovereigns embodied not the Hobbesian centralism of the ideal-typical sovereign state but testify instead to the immense power of dispersed and delegated forms of authority as instruments of imperial expansion” (46).²⁰ Thinking broadly about this idea of travelling authority, Phillips also maintains that European colonial efforts abroad were not novel historical movements but historically continuous. For instance, before company sovereigns reached the Americas, Africa, and Asia, this loose political structure had been repeated countless times over the centuries across the “internal frontiers” of Europe, Eurasia, and elsewhere. Again, not by asserting political power directly, but by diluting and distributing it via rhizomatic channels of networked governance and negotiated systems of remote alliances (41, 45).²¹ Extrapolating from this, systems of networked governance as reflected in the institution of company sovereigns might be said to constitute the formal structure of colonization everywhere,

²⁰ Another phillips quote

²¹ Ibid

and regardless of colonization's more exact historical details across contexts. Anarchic perhaps, but not in the sense of rule-lessness, but rather in the sense of aboriginality does empire reproduce itself.

In any case, lest I digress any further on that thought, for Phillips the zenith of the power of the institution of company sovereigns roughly spans centuries ranging from 1450 and 1750. In the African context, company sovereigns established trading outposts and settlements primarily along the coastlines and from these coastal bases they helped to lay the foundations for the international slave trade through relationships of payment and negotiation with local rulers and as intermediaries between these local rulers and foreign markets. In Asia, the influence of the early company sovereigns first expressed itself over pre-existing maritime trade networks and the port cities connecting them. The recent withdrawal of the Ming Dynasty's naval fleets from the regional waters of south and east Asia meant that when European vessels first arrived in the area, their efforts at controlling these already well-established trade networks went largely uncontested. As a result, the maritime trade wealth of the eastern oceans was rerouted away from Asian powers toward institutions such as the Dutch and British East India companies and to their European investors and the governments that chartered such expeditions. But again, the transfer of wealth from India and elsewhere to Europe was not necessarily a government-run program; rather, it was established and maintained by non-state actors and was in place for nearly two centuries before the British Crown or other European governments took control over it. In the Americas, while colonial movements were there undertaken with different purposes in mind—the English and Dutch trade companies were concerned to establish permanent settlements whereas their French, Spanish, and Portuguese counterparts were initially more interested in

establishing trade bases and extracting resources— in all cases the design and implementation of programs of genocide, enslavement, and dispossession were not initiated by European governments but by company sovereigns. Therefore, at least during the early centuries of colonial history company sovereigns were the primary institution, or set of institutions, responsible for inaugurating future colonial dynamics and catalyzing differential political and economic futures around the world.

And yet, almost ironically, company sovereigns eventually became victims of their own success. Similar to how the gradual consolidation of sovereign political power into fewer and fewer hands in the late medieval and early modern European context had prefigured the beginning of the end of terrestrial mercenary armies, a similar process unfolded across colonial territories. Despite company sovereigns' early contributions to the wealth and prestige of European courts, the more successful they became the faster they fell out of favor with their former political patrons. Beginning in the late 17th century, military conflicts between emerging European states increasingly began to 'spill over' into colonial contexts. Under these new circumstances, European governments correspondingly began to apply greater degrees of external pressure onto their previously independent colonial enclaves, and these pressures fundamentally changed how company sovereigns related both to one another and to their countries of origin. In many cases, they found themselves in direct competition with emerging European political states rather than in continued cooperation with them, and this "exacerbated an inner tension between their driving motives of profit and power... and drove them toward ever greater reliance upon territorial expansions and the taxation of local populations..., changing their very nature as conquest and government eclipsed trade and profit as their primary

purpose” (43).²² In other words, as their mission changed, so too did their identities; consequently, so too did how European politicians and populations view them.

This latter detail brings the institution of company sovereigns back into conversation with the numerous intellectual and economic changes which were sweeping over Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries. In economic terms, the transition from mercantilism to capitalism reframed the monopolistic powers of company sovereigns as anathema to the principles of modern economic growth. They began to be viewed, essentially, as obstacles to economic competition, growth, and innovation. In terms of intellectual cultures, company sovereigns came to be viewed as working against the political and economic interests of the wider public as novel political doctrines related to individual political liberties and the reasonable limits of governmental power made them seem more like anachronistic political forms than modern institutions. Edmund Burke, for example, in part built his political career by campaigning vigorously against the British East India Company (BEIC)’s conquest of Bengal in the 1760’s, and Adam Smith loudly complained of company sovereigns’ stranglehold over the national economy.²³ So for whatever differences obtained between Burke and Smith, these examples show how elements of 18th century British society converged on the view that company sovereigns were anathema to the national interest.

To contend with these political and intellectual trends, Phillips further explains, the most powerful company sovereigns of the day first tried to outcompete European states. Around the world, local European institutions increased tax burdens on colonized populations, and they used much of these revenues to construct more powerful navies and field larger mercenary armies to

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid, 43.

further their territorial acquisitions. While they hoped these efforts would allow them to outcompete their European political rivals, the actual consequences were to generate ever wider and deeper resistance to foreign occupation and to provoke numerous rebellions which only drained rather than replenished their coffers. And even where they were successful in extending their terrestrial domains, this success itself directly challenged the rising hegemony of European crowns and so, instead of outpacing them, company sovereigns only pushed their former patrons to see them as threats to their own wealth, social standing, and geopolitical goals. As a result, beginning in the mid-18th century European political powers increasingly sought to regulate the internal and external affairs of company sovereigns, and not much later they began to revoke their charters. The BEIC, for instance, lost control over the Indian subcontinent to the British Crown in 1859 following the Indian Mutiny, and in 1869 the Hudson Bay company, once the largest landowning corporation in the world, at least on paper, was similarly forced to relinquish its North American claims to the New Canadian Confederacy. Company sovereigns were becoming a thing of the past; now, political, economic, and military powers were to belong to nations.

Although Phillips does narrate one final period in his history of the institution of company sovereigns occurring from 1870 until the outbreak of the Second World War, since this period does not alter or add anything to the general picture I am trying to illustrate, I will only add that it marks the end of the run for non-state force actors. So while company sovereigns and their mercenary forces continued to function across colonial contexts—take the example of James Dole’s mercenaries in the Hawaiian Islands— the deeper we get into the 20th century the less relevant non-state force actors become. In the story I am narrating in this chapter, this was

the final piece puzzle for unlocking the full development of the nation-state system and the modern public- private distinction. In other words, until political states were able to put the lid on pre- and non-state force actors, they could not succeed at establishing their vertically integrated legal and political orders. This does not mean that private business interests and their non-state force actors ceased to exist altogether, but it does mean that like Carvalho's "lesser nobles" of the past, they were eventually forced into alignment with the more powerful political and administrative apparatuses taking shape around them. Based on these findings, the contemporary re-normalization of the widespread use of non-state force actors by both private and public powers alike more than simply mediates the future development of nation-states and their foreign and domestic legal arrangements, it fractures them.

Matters Methodological

In the introduction to this chapter, I indicated the value of thinking about the contemporary security sector within a wider historical framework than is sometimes activated within the literature of critical security studies. It is now time to return to that discussion. To help facilitate it, let me now return to Zaynab Quadri's *American Quarterly* article 'War is Still a Racket: Private Military Contracting, US Imperialism, and the Iraq War.' I hasten to add that Quadri expresses clear awareness that "the phenomenon of private military contracting has long historical roots," but beyond this initial gesture nothing else concerning the deeper history of latter-day security governance paradigms factors into the text (525).²⁴ This is not a liability. One selects different starting points for good reasons, I suppose, and so even if the deeper history I

²⁴ Quadri, Zaynab. *War is Still a Racket*

discussed in the previous two sections falls outside of the scope of Quadri's analysis, I still wish to underscore that this article is no less spot on with regard to many of its conclusions. My aim in this section, therefore, is only to show what on a theoretical level a longer historical review can do for the study of contemporary security-sector fusions.

Turning to Quadri's article, its central heuristic for reading contemporary security-sector fusions is "war by private contract— a regime I call 'securitized corporate governance' ... a system of power that shifts the loci of civil federal power to corporations and operates with impunity by evading even the pretense of democratic accountability" (525).²⁵ The lens of securitized corporate governance reveals, just to name two of Quadri's most important examples, how US military expansions following the Second World War helped birth the private sector military logistics and supply industries (such as Halliburton and KBR) in the first place, and these industries which would then, somewhat ironically, go on to exacerbate the neoliberal overturning of traditional public-private sector relations in more recent history. As for a second example, Quadri's idea of securitized corporate governance is also helpful for illuminating the historical transformation of the US Department of Defense (USDOD) into "no longer a war fighting organization, [but] a business enterprise" (527).²⁶ For Quadri, the significance of this transformation is similar to what I previously described in the introduction to this dissertation regarding the ascent of capital into the position of the master-signifier: the more the USDOD becomes a business enterprise, the less a people determine the content of the friend-enemy distinction.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

With these examples in view, Quadri proceeds to identify the “existential stakes of this structural shift” (528).²⁷ “If corporate entities are able to drive the... security sector... the very foundations of popular sovereignty are called into question,” and two major consequences will follow (528).²⁸ First, “the loci of power within the US and beyond [change],” and second, “securitized corporate governance [becomes] a kind of anti-governance” (532).²⁹ These insights strongly resonate with the perspectives I offered in the introduction to this dissertation regarding the consequences of security fusions for political futures, and by my lights they also inspire us to ponder emerging forms of political, economic, cultural, or other forms of social mobilization beyond the histories of the nation-state system and the public-private distinction. But that is not where Quadri goes with it.

Instead, Quadri offers an exploration of the “continued anarchy of empire” that is guided by Amy Kaplan’s notion of the continued anarchy of empire.³⁰ For Quadri, this framework reveals the juridical ruleless-ness of regimes of securitized corporate governance. PMCs and the corporate or state powers which mobilize them do so, and do so rather effectively, at least in part to exploit the juridical voids which punctuate the international system. In this way, empires ‘leap’ ahead of states, so to speak, to expand and enrich capital markets, and colonial political states then follow to shore up the spoils of anarchic violence. Thus, with respect to the ideal of the rule of law— and of course states never tire of invoking it— Quadri will go on to specify how “the slipperiness and unruliness of securitized corporate governance as a regime of power” is what establishes the very anarchy that states can then exploit to assert their own political and legal

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire*.

principles, to in effect make order out of disorder.³¹ As I am reading it, this is the *constitutive gap* between (the Derridean) law of force and the force of the law; it is what exposes the formally inscribed impossibility of liberal law's extension to the conditions of its own historical emergence and promulgation, an idea that I will return to when I conclude this chapter.

As for this "slipperiness" itself, it helps Quadri to generate a list of the ways in which PMCs might be said to represent anarchic assemblages of coercive power and authority. For instance, despite the widespread employment of PMCs in Iraq (and elsewhere) by both corporations and the United States and other so-called 'rule of law' nations, the Coalition Provisional Authority nonetheless declared that all PMCs operating in Iraq were "immune from the Iraqi legal process" (533).³² At the same time, as non-state actors PMCs also fell beyond the reach of domestic US legal infrastructures as well as the categories, rules, and institutions of the international system. I will say more about the relationship between PMCs and the international system in the next two chapters, so there is no need to belabor the point now, but at the very least these legal details underscore the very literality of Kaplan's notion of the anarchy of empire: PMCs and other forms of non-state force actors mark the absence of the rule of law; they reveal the rule of law's obscene but perhaps necessary obscene supplement, political violence.

But when it comes to Quadri's major conclusions regarding the meaning of PMCs in Iraq and elsewhere, this is where the subtle differences between reading security-sector fusions on a shorter versus a longer historical timeline emerge. As mentioned, Quadri mobilizes a Kaplanian analytic to read PMCs. In Kaplan's framework, certain political and legal distinctions (such as the foreign and the domestic and the public and the private) are at bottom contingent, unstable,

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

and interpenetrating categories which only appear stable and separate. In effect, these categories facilitate the mirage of legal and political order, but in truth they render opaque the essential unruliness of imperial adventures. However, although Kaplan's paradigm seems to present us with an effective means for studying modern legal and political logics, it also leaves underexplored their empirical genesis, and it also cannot accommodate the possibility of their non-existence as legal, political, or social coordinates, either in the past or in the future. In other words, even if modern political and legal logics are artificial, contingent, and perhaps also dissimulating constructs, nonetheless their *actual* historical developments have slipped out of view, as have their future trajectories.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to fortify this critique of Kaplan's work, so for the moment it remains provisional. However, assuming there is something to it what, if anything, does it add to Quadri's more recent report on PMCs? In combination, the relatively recent vintage of nation-states and the modern public-private distinction, the continuity of force contracting practices before, during, and after the historical transition into political and legal modernity, and the formation of the latter as a result of changes within the social organization of coercive powers and authorities together imply that even if PMCs reveal the anarchy of empire as Quadri rightly suggests, their proliferation in the present is about more than just a repetition of Kaplanian entanglements. Rather, as I set out to show in the next two chapters their proliferation indexes the empirical decay of the structural coordinates which on a Kaplanian model are merely entangled. Putting this a little differently, when we start to think in terms of there no longer being any distinctions to either entangle or disentangle, then the Kaplanian framework breaks down. For Quadri's analysis, the deeper history of force contracting methods and models therefore

means there is a theoretical point at which it will no longer make sense to continue with the dissection of PMCs under the auspices of the nation-state system or the public-private distinction.

Pace Brown, Quadri insightfully questions whether PMCs represent an overturning of liberal democratic norms or if in truth they mark their reaffirmation. Ultimately, Quadri leans toward the latter. “This seeming breakdown of liberal democracy,” she writes, “is at its heart only a new generation of Kaplan’s anarchy of empire” (538-539).³³ In other words, even as Quadri tries to hold onto the idea that “companies and markets have become empowered to take up the mantle of imperial worldbuilding/world-destroying that used to be most often dominated by traditional governments/states,” nevertheless she settles on the view that what at first looks like the overturning of liberal-democratic norms can also be viewed as the very lifeblood of this political form (539).³⁴ On this (very Derridean) view, PMCs pave the way for the future of liberal democracy not by reaffirming its normative logics, but by violating them, by operating at the forefront of “the turmoil of imperial violence” in a manner which secures liberal democracy’s historical perdurance as well as Euro-American political and economic privileges (539).³⁵ However, when we consider the historical relationships between political forms and the social organization of coercive powers and authorities, we instead find that large scale reconfigurations within the social structure of security governance does not yield political continuity but instead introduces epochal political ruptures. In that regard, the proliferation of PMCs and other forms of force privatization in the contemporary period indicate the legal and political norms associated

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

with liberal democracy are being sublated, not sustained. We are not on repeat, we are witnessing the emergence of a new configuration of political, economic, and military powers.

Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the lessons we should draw from the deeper history of security governance paradigms are multiple, yet they all begin with the double-recognition that, first, political powers and forms have relied on various forms of mercenaryism to accomplish their internal and external security objectives throughout most of the historical record; and second, the concept of ‘private’ military contracting fundamentally depends on the related histories of the nation-state system and the public-private distinction for its intelligibility as such. Not only are non-state force actors far more historically continuous than anomalous, but they were also among the primary catalysts responsible for the dialectics of modern nation-state formation and the development of the public-private distinction across both European and colonial contexts.

From this perspective, we can better see why modern political philosophers, economists, and legal scholars fretted over the question of the origins and location of sovereign authority and why they were so deeply concerned to justify or condemn governmental or popular coercion. These were not simply ‘armchair’ exercises, too. The rising power of European political states, the formation of professional standing armies, and not long after, the birth of ‘public’ police forces injected a fundamental dilemma into modern social and political life in which state tyranny and popular revolution came to define the actually existing range of political possibilities, so it is no surprise that political, economic, and legal theorists felt the need to tackle these issues. As I have suggested, however, this fundamental dilemma was itself only a secondary feature resulting from a more primary process defined by the dynamic pressures and

conflicts created by the centuries-long struggle over the social organization of coercive powers and authorities. In other words, the tensions between the ideas of authoritarianism and representational politics, and between public versus private power, both already presuppose a radically high degree of control over heterogeneous force actors across both European and colonial contexts.

In conclusion, the myriad phenomena associated with contemporary force ‘privatization’ movements strike both familiar and unfamiliar chords. On the one hand, the scope and scale of the 21st century proliferation of ‘legitimate’ force actors is unlike anything anyone alive today has witnessed.³⁶ And while it is true that, as I will discuss in the next chapter, non-state force actors played regular roles in international political and military dramas throughout the entirety of the 20th century, nevertheless the fact remains that in comparison with national militaries and public policing forces non-state force actors throughout nearly all of this century remained relatively small in number, their activities were highly clandestine, and politicians and publics alike generally viewed with mistrust and disdain.³⁷ On the other hand, a certain historical consciousness must now also recognize them as familiar, for when we push back in time beyond the formation of modern political and legal logics non-state force actors suddenly seem more like a return to normal than an aberration. As discussed in this chapter, in the long history of force contracting practices it is largely dominated by a normative arrangement in which political and

³⁶ In some senses this is true, but in other respects this statement does not do justice to the fact that across a variety of contexts imperial powers mobilized non-state forces throughout much of the latter half of the 20th century. So at a deeper level of analysis perhaps it is better to say that this proliferation of non-state military actors is today more widely publicized and normalized than it was in such counter-insurgency contexts as Haiti, Nicaragua, Columbia, and numerous other sites of counterrevolutionary warfare.

³⁷ I have already mentioned the differences in public reactions to the Haditha versus Nissour Square Massacres, but with respect to public reactions to the clandestine use of non-state military actors, the Sandline Affair in Papua New Guinea gives another clear example of what I am referring to here.

military powers were kept apart as fundamentally different things. These powers could function in tandem, or they could be at loggerheads, but scarcely if ever were they conflated to the same degree that they were throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries.

History does not offer perfect templates for interpreting the social and political meanings of latter-day security governance practices, however. The historical development of liberal-democracies casts such a large shadow over the phenomenon of contemporary security contracting practices that, as Abrahamsen and Williams word it, the deeper history of force contracting practices at best may only serve as a collection of “metaphors and reminders of the historically and politically construed nature of the public-private distinction and its connection to shifting structures of political power” (89).³⁸ But even if the deeper history of security governance paradigms will not allow me to precisely predict their future social and political impacts, based on the history I have narrated in this chapter, I maintain I can still productively apply this chapter’s insights to what remains of this dissertation to at least clear off some more dust from the proverbial crystal ball.

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CHAPTER THREE

WHITHER THE STATE? CONTEMPORARY SECURITY
SECTOR HYBRIDIZATIONS AND THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE
DISTINCTIONChapter Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, military and security contracting models in the present must be understood as participating in a long-standing institutional practice that predates both the modern nation-state system and its intimately associated development of the public-private distinction. Both pre-and non-state military actors, I argued, were integral to the very development of nation-states and the distinction between public and private domains, and from this point of view the organization of security cultures is intimately bound up with wider political conditions during any period of study, up to and including the present. In this chapter, I now move away from the deeper historical contexts I considered in the last chapter into the more recent past, up to the present day, and I observe major shifts in the longer-term evolution of security governance paradigms. I begin in Section 2 by briefly considering relationships between political states and non-state military actors during the post-World War II period to highlight important differences between their dynamics during this time period and their more recent configurations. Then in §3, I deliver an extensive survey of 21st century force ‘privatization’ movements and use this survey to begin to assess the social and political impacts of the contemporary return to non-state military and policing models. Finally, in §4 I discuss important political, cultural, technological, economic, philosophical, and other factors that converged

during the latter half of the 20th century and helped shape the rise in the number and influence of non-state military and security actors in more recent years. By means of this approach, I develop the argument that one of the most salient impacts of contemporary security-sector fusions is the deconstruction of the public-private distinction. This distinction does not simply bend, it buckles.

Private Force in the Shadows of the 20th Century State

Although force privatization movements decreased dramatically in terms of their scope and significance during the post-war period, they did not disappear altogether but continued to operate throughout the remainder of the 20th century. During this time, they evinced various degrees of imbrication with nation-state interests and administrative direction. Sometimes they acted as extensions of nation-states' foreign policies, and sometimes they contravened them. Long before the official entry of the United States into World War II, for instance, the Roosevelt administration had organized clandestine partnerships between US aircraft manufacturers and the military to wage a proxy war with Japan for control over Chinese air space.¹ This example is typical of the dynamics between the public and private sectors throughout the latter half of the 20th century. In such cases, what is most distinctive about force privatization movements is that they remained relatively small in scope and impact, and they held a position of at best secondary importance relative to the security norms, methods, and objectives established by nation-states in the name of the public interest. Thus, even as late 19th century expansions to the powers held by company sovereigns were unfolding across colonial contexts alongside processes of nation-state formation, governments throughout Europe and North America were at the same time

¹ As discussed in McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*. The Flying Tigers program, p. 36.

increasingly seeking to assert greater political authority over numerous colonial topographies including the western territories of the US and Canada, the Hawaiian Islands, sites throughout Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and across the African continent as well, and they would continue to do so at least until the post-colonial movements of the post-war period. Overall, then, the 20th century represents the apogee of nation-state power, but also the nadir of non-state security actors' abilities to independently influence events and enact governmental-like functions around the world.

There was, however, an important consequence to the relegation of non-state security actors to a position of secondary importance, and McFate's insights into this matter are valuable to recall. Because non-state security actors had been relegated to a position of at best secondary importance relative to established and emerging nation-states, the numerous treaties enacted between political states during the late 19th and early 20th century such as the Lieber Code (1863), the First and Second Geneva Conventions (1864, 1907), and the Hague Conventions (1899, 1907) were entirely devoid of any language governing the conduct of warfare and policing by non-state security actors. As nation-state powers grew into titanic proportions throughout the 20th century this gap in international law only persisted.² There are no rules, for example, governing the conduct of non-state security actors vis-à-vis either civilian populations or sovereign political states expressed in the 3rd and 4th Geneva conventions (1929, 1949), for instance, and such omissions would continue until a number of civil and international conflicts brought the issue into the limelight several decades later.

² Ibid, Chapter 4.

The Congo Crisis (1960-1968) represents a paradigmatic case here. Political scientist Eugenio Cusumano and the international security studies scholar Christopher Kinsey together narrate how throughout the Congo crisis mercenary forces were clandestinely recruited by a variety of global governments in cooperation with locally competing factions as a means of advancing myriad sets of local, regional, and geopolitical policy objectives.³ In this example, the use of mercenaries as opposed to state forces allowed all parties to the conflict to ignore formerly developed international treaties and it additionally provided foreign governments with plausible deniability regarding what were in truth their rather active roles in shaping this and other military conflicts around the world. As Cusumano and Kinsey further observe, this strategy was repeated time and again across numerous postcolonial geographies of power so that, throughout the 1960's and 1970's, the recruitment of mercenary forces by state and non-state actors alike enjoyed a brief and precedent-setting resurgence that continues to inform similar practices in the present. Yet at the time such continuation of policy by other means was completely unregulated, let alone discussed, within international policy and law, and this meant that mercenary forces would continue to play important roles in civil and interstate conflicts around the world for the remainder of the 20th century.⁴

As a result of the ongoing use by political states of non-state force actors, beginning in the 1970's international bodies such as the United Nations began to consider whether there was a need to include non-state military and security actors within their regulatory frameworks. Such concerns were first reflected in 1977 in Article 47 of the 2nd Geneva protocols, the text of which begins, ambitiously, with the assertion that “mercenaries have no right to be a combatant or

³ Cusumano, Eugenio and Kinsey, Christopher. *Concluding comments, Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 1-2, 294-312.

⁴ Mcfate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*. 35-40

prisoner of war.”⁵ But despite its significance as the first contemporary attempt to formally proscribe mercenary actors from participating in domestic and international conflicts, the underlying reality was that the qualifying language used in Article 47’s sub-sections to define both mercenaryism and who counts as a mercenary was, as McFate observes, “at once both so restrictive yet imprecise that almost no one fell into its categories, and [quoting the legal scholar Geoffrey Best] any mercenary who cannot exclude himself from this definition deserves to be shot- and his lawyer with him” (39).⁶ Since then, further international regulatory attempts to define and limit the activities of military and security contractors have consistently failed, and on the domestic front, nation-state governments have either been unwilling, or unable, to establish any meaningful industry regulations as well.^{7,8} The regulations that do exist— if they can be called that—have emerged from security industry groups themselves, but only as attempts to self-regulate in the name of improving professional standards, public relations, and shared best practices, not because they are seeking to limit their own social and economic powers relative to political states or populations.⁹

⁵ “Mercenaries,” United Nations Charter Article 47 Additional Protocol (I), 1977.

⁶ Mcfate, Sean. *Modern Mercenary*.

⁷ For example, in the US domestic context such an attempt was made in 1978. In that year, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals heard the case of *Weinberger vs Equifax*. In short, Weinberger had lost a lucrative government contract to Equifax and attempted to sue the government under the 1893 Anti-Pinkerton Act on the premise that Equifax’s security apparatuses constituted a similar organization to the Pinkerton Detective Agency of yesteryear. The court sided with Equifax, however, and argued that the Anti-Pinkerton Act only applied to “quasi-military armed forces for hire.” The court did not define the meaning of ‘quasi-militaristic armed forces,’ concluding merely “that a company which provides guard or protective services does not thereby become a quasi-military armed force, even if the individual guards are armed, and even if the company may also be engaged in the business of providing general investigative or detective services.” (Government Accountability Office Report, 1978).

⁸ Cf. Abrahamsen, Rita and Leander, Anna. *Routledge Handbook of Private Security Studies*. In particular, Chapters 22-26.

⁹As Joachim and Schneiker (2019) have so meticulously shown, in recent years security industry groups have jointly endeavored to re-brand themselves as the new face of cosmopolitanism and as the sole remaining protectors of humanitarian rights and ethics. Joachim, Jutta, and Andrea Schneiker. *Private security and identity politics: Ethical hero warriors, professional managers and new humanitarians*. Routledge, 2018.

The resurgence of mercenary activities alongside global postcolonial movements during the post-war period continued beyond these initial moments of resurgence. Just as postcolonial power vacuums had generated numerous conflicts around the world, so too did the end of the Cold War help to inaugurate a series of domestic and international conflicts which similarly presented non-state force actors with a fresh set of market opportunities. Throughout the 1990s, mercenary companies again began to multiply, and whether intentionally or not it was also during this decade that both governments and non-state actors around the world poured the foundations for an explosive resurgence of non-state military and police actors during the first quarter of the 21st century. As examples of mercenary activities throughout the 1990's, the NATO alliance re-introduced the old practice of hiring private military service providers to the European continent by enlisting DynCorp International (now the Amentum Company) to train and equip the newly formed militaries of Kosovo, Bosnia, and Croatia following their aerial bombing campaign against the Serbian forces of Slobodan Milosevic. In the Latin American and Caribbean contexts, the US began subcontracting with diverse military service providers to train and equip allied partisan groups in Haiti, Columbia, and elsewhere. In Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Seychelles, Angola, Zimbabwe, Gabon, and Cameron, British and French mercenary companies were hired by local political leaders and foreign businesses alike to fight alongside or against local forces and even, on some occasions, against one another. In the wake of the fall of the South African apartheid regime, to take a final example, remnants of the national police, military, and intelligence agencies combined to establish the now-infamous paramilitary group Executive Outcomes. For a brief period of time, Executive Outcomes functioned as both a security services agency protecting foreign-owned assets across post-Apartheid South Africa, but

beyond that, they also functioned as an independent, offensive military unit, launching invasions across South Africa's borders with the goal of toppling regional governments and installing regimes more friendly to global mining interests.¹⁰

All of these examples are important both in their own right and as precursors to 21st century force privatization movements; however, at the time, they had not yet reached their contemporary degrees of scope and impact. In retrospect, the force privatization movements of the early post-war period may have helped set the stage for their current configurations, but their existence remained of secondary importance relative to nation-state structures and administrative direction, and they were still mostly legible through the familiar lens of the public-private distinction. Prior to the new millennium, in short, they had not yet reached such proportion relative to states and their legal norms that they could have been meaningfully labelled as primary indicators of legal and political flux on a global scale or as harbingers of the collapse of the public-private distinction within liberal states. Entering the 21st century, however, that all begins to change.

Security Governance in the 21st Century

Moving into the 21st century, as a general rule the differences between security governance paradigms during the decades prior to the turn of the millennia and their more recent configurations hinge on one key point. Whereas earlier examples of security governance practices and institutions were more recognizably disjunctive, that is, they were more clearly observable through the familiar lens of the public-private distinction, today their belonging to

¹⁰ Cf., McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*. Chapter 9. Cf. Cusumono, Eugenio and Kinsey, Christopher. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*.

one side or the other of this legal and political divide has become increasingly opaque. Across a variety of contexts, determining whether security governance actors and institutions constitute private or public expressions of power and authority has become increasingly difficult. That is not to say that one cannot find counterexamples in which the lines remain relatively clear; rather, it is a question of proportion and proliferation and, in the end, a matter of interpretation. As I show in this section, the contemporary empirical realities are such that public and private security actors evince such profound degrees of imbrication that it is no longer clear our normative legal and political categories can apply to them. As the legal scholar Charles Nemeth had already bluntly worded it in 2012, “for most lawyers and scholars, private security is *terra incognita*—wild, unmapped, and largely unexplored” (13).¹¹ Twelve years later, the situation has not changed but only grown more acute.

The task in this section is therefore primarily descriptive. I will be painting a sufficiently broad picture to facilitate a transition from calling developments within the social structure of security governance ‘contemporary force privatization movements’ to calling them, instead, ‘force hybridization movements.’ Since these changes within global security governance structures are both broad and deep, there are many possible places to begin with such a description. At the same time, however, this scope itself is already significant. The very globality of security-sector reformations renders the ‘shape’ of any local security governance practice into a double figure constituted as much through the interplay of global contingencies as through local or regional ideals, beliefs, and desires. Between the local, the regional, and the global, nation-states exist on an intermediary level as both porous and fixed, as turnstiles across which

¹¹ Nemeth, Charles P. *Private Security and the Law*.

transnational security practices take shape, giving warp and woof to local security practices and marking them with additional possibilities and limits depending on the governing laws and principles they encounter as they move across different national contexts. Thus, I will begin by looking ‘inward’ from the perspective of nation-state borders at the proliferation of private policing models that have emerged in recent years on a grand scale across numerous domestic contexts.

Global security studies scholars Joakim Berndtsson and Maria Stern define private as opposed to public police “at a very general level... [as] individuals who work for commercial entities [who] seek to provide loss prevention and the protection of life and assets,” but like many scholars of contemporary force ‘privatization’ movement they are cautious about making any hard and fast distinctions between public and private policing models (53).¹² To understand why, we might first look at the historian Michael Kempa’s *The Private Origins of Modern Public Policing* before further considering what Berndtsson and Stern notice about private policing practices in the present.¹³ Kempa’s study follows “a Foucauldian pathway” to demonstrate how liberal states’ public policing agencies did not appear overnight at the command of the state, but were instead initially formed through a series of experimental partnerships between political states and the many pre-existing private security forces which became commonplace in the wake of European industrialization. The first large scale social experiments with public policing models occurred in the early 19th century in England, but they were thereafter quickly copied in the United States and elsewhere. But wherever they emerged, they utilized models, practices, discourses, and often also the same personnel, as has already existed among the many private

¹² Berndtsson, Joakim., Ster, Maria. *Private Security Guards: Authority, Control, and Governance?*

¹³ Kempa, Michael. *The ‘Private’ Origins of Modern ‘Public’ Policing.*

guarding services that were then being used by companies to protect against the rampant theft of goods from ports and warehouses on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the British context, for instance, while Parliament was initially opposed to the idea of using state funds to pay for the protection of private property—legislators of the day believed instead it was the responsibility of individual businesses to purchase their own security services—through a series of pilot programs advocates for publicly funded policing services eventually managed to convince policy makers otherwise. Among several examples of these early pilot programs, Kempa includes the story of the Thames River Valley Policing Authority. In 1797, the Scottish industrial magnate Patrick Colquhoun and the philosopher Jeremy Bentham successfully convinced the British West India Company to finance a pilot study into the effectiveness of joint policing programs, beginning with a single study focused on theft prevention across the many interior ports lining the Thames River. With consent from the British government, these investors next partnered with local constabularies along the trade route and together they established the Thames River Valley Policing Authority. As it turned out, the program was successful beyond expectation. In its first year alone, through an initial shared investment of ~4,200lbs the investors grew their collective profits by more than 100,000lbs.¹⁴ More importantly, as these profits were also a form of taxable income state coffers also benefitted significantly from the program. Thus, besides improving their own wealth, the program's designers additionally demonstrated to government officials that relatively small investments into policing could produce much larger gains for state tax revenues. The idea quickly gained traction and over time it became normalized. Based on this history, Kempa

¹⁴ Ibid, 25.

concludes that “policing [today] has come full circle, a return to an early liberal capitalist norm of mentalities, institutions, and practices of security across the public and private sectors” (28).¹⁵ However, while this conclusion is not incorrect the fact that similarities obtain between early 19th and 21st century security-sector hybridizations does not alone signify a clean repetition of past dynamics; rather, it suggests the need to read these similarities against the changed backdrop of our own historical horizon, which differs markedly from that of early 19th century England.

Returning to the analyses of Berndtsson and Stern, I believe they point to a slightly different conclusion than Kempa’s. In their research into emerging domestic policing norms Berndtsson and Stern find that in countries as diverse as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sweden, Brazil, Niger, the United States, Bulgaria, Russian, India, and many others the number of persons serving on behalf of local, state, and national policing agencies (that is, agencies associated with the ‘public’ domain) has recently been markedly surpassed by the number of persons finding employment through private security vendors.¹⁶ These non-state security providers range from small, locally-owned businesses consisting of a few employees to vast transnational corporate entities employing upwards of 750,000 personnel and who offer stock options to globally dispersed investors. And in some cases, these vast security enterprises are owned and managed by transnational private equity firms that remain un beholden to any national identities whatsoever.¹⁷ Regardless of the scale of any individual company, however, the collective ranks of non-state security actors now greatly surpass the number of state-financed

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Berndtsson, Joakim and Stern, Maria. *Private Security Guards: Authority, Control, Governance?*

¹⁷ For example, in 2022 the largest private equity firm in the world, Blackrock Incorporated, acquired the world’s largest security services company, Allied Universal; and in acquiring Allied Universal, Blackrock Inc. became both the largest financier of the privatize security industry and, at the same time, the largest global financier of privately managed water resource management and delivery corporations.

public security officers. In this security environment, skeptics of the security hybridization argument might suggest that there are still important legal-technical differences between the security functions performed by public police officers on the one hand, and private ones on the other, and on a piecemeal approach that may be true. However, given the total field of security governance practices, as both Berndtsson and Stern and Nemeth have each independently observed, these distinctions remain murky at best.¹⁸ In light of this blurring of the lines between the social functions and identities of public and private security agents, we cannot defend the heuristic value of the public-private distinction for making sense of security governance structures and practices simply by presupposing it.

Further complicating these matters, “the lack of clear-cut definitions and delineations [between public and private aspects of security governance] is itself only magnified through the continual expansion of security privatization trends” (55).¹⁹ This latter point now helps me to clarify the subtle differences between Kempa’s conclusion and my own: security-sector hybridizations in the past still belonged within the period of nation-state formations and the solidification of the modern public-private distinction, but in the present, they belong to a time in which nation-state formations and the public-private distinction have themselves already become ossified conceptual coordinates. Therefore, current trends toward security-sector fusions do not necessarily symbolize a return to past norms. Instead, they situate non-state security actors as agents responsible for the policing of topographies that have already become ostensibly public

¹⁸ In *Private Security and the Law*, Nemeth (2012) addresses both the ‘piecemeal’ approach and the ‘blurrier’ aspects of contemporary public and private sector security hybridizations. Regarding Berndtsson and Stern’s work, they discuss the relationship between the public and private security sectors as “fluid,” “confused,” and “unclear,” and they suggest “the lexicon of modern state sovereignty... is overridden in practice” (56).

¹⁹ Berndtsson, Joakim and Stern, Maria. *Private Security Guards: Authority, Control, Governance?*

spaces, and which have already amassed some 200 years' worth of symbolic value as such. In this way, the privatization of domestic policing practices helps to transform the symbolic homogeneity of the public domain into a heterogeneity of what Berndtsson and Stern describe as a system of "privately defined orders."

Further blurring the lines between the public and private domains is the additional fact that public police officers across numerous global contexts now routinely avail themselves to private companies for hire as private security guards.²⁰ This is not, however, simply a case of 'moonlighting.' In many such cases, the public police officers hired by private companies retain their status, rights, paychecks, and symbolic powers as uniformed public police officers while they perform duties assigned to them by non-state actors. In their study of the global commercial security industry, for example, Abrahamsen and Williams spotlight a variety of examples drawn from across the Niger River delta which show local and national police forces there regularly supplement their salaries by explicitly offering their services *as* public police officers to transnational oil and mining companies operating in the region.²¹ These practices, however, do not only occur within the underfunded state bureaucracies of the world. In fact, these same practices have become increasingly common across the contemporary United States and Canada, and particularly in the context of resource extraction operations. This tendency to conflate the social functions of public police officers with the private ambitions of the business community is therefore more understandable in the context of changing global security governance norms than simply as a function of the depth of any individual states' coffers. It is a bureaucratic invention,

²⁰ Cf. Higate, Doctor Paul and Utas, Mats. *Private security in Africa: From the global assemblage to the everyday*. Chapters 1, 2, 5, 8. Cf., Parrish, Will and Brown, Allen. "A Canadian Energy Company Bought an Oregon Sheriff Department." *The Intercept*. Cf. Interviews with Taylor, Brock., and Reyburn, Sarah.

²¹ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*. 122-171

or if one prefers, a bureaucratic re-invention; it is a method, a technical solution to the security governance challenges confronting both public and private actors in today's world. Be that as it may, such solutions dissolve the meaning of the public-private distinction.

The issues of security-sector hybridizations, however, go much deeper than the most public facing element found within these trends, that of private security guarding services. A less visible although nonetheless extremely important recent structural development within global security governance patterns is the spread of what the communications scholar Hamilton Bean refers to as the rise of "private intelligence services" (79).²² This designation does not only connote the rapid growth in the number of private sector intelligence gathering organizations which are now available for hire by individuals, institutions, and governments alike; rather, as Bean frames it the more meaningful issue here is the "dissolution of the public/private distinction in terms of the work that intelligence collectors, analysts, and operators now perform" on behalf of nominally 'public' security agencies (79).²³ For a sense of scale, between 2001 and 2010 the US intelligence community added some 31,000 private intelligence vendors to its payrolls with 1,931 of them solely dedicated to the collection of intelligence across the domestic US context.²⁴ According to a 2008 *Washington Post* investigative report, roughly 70% of the total US intelligence community's budget was then directed to non-state intelligence service providers, and at a cost to public taxpayers of roughly \$50 billion dollars annually.²⁵ Since 2010, the overall amount of money directed to private intelligence vendors has increased, although the percentage of these costs relative to the total US intelligence community's budget has slightly decreased. Of

²² Bean, Hamilton. *Privatizing intelligence*.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid, 80.

²⁵ O'Harrow Jr., Robert. 'Contractors Augment Intelligence Agencies.' *Washington Post*.

the nearly \$90 billion appropriated by Congress for use by various US intelligence agencies in 2022, \$59 billion of it went to private intelligence vendors.^{26,27,28} When confronted with such figures, the meaning of the public-private distinction is more than opaque. It is non-existent.

There are indeed historical continuities linking present day security contracting practices to historical precursors, but as I must stress again, the issue today is one of scope and scale. There is, in other words, a point at which quantitative distinctions slip over into qualitative ones. Thus, if we focus on the continuative dimension alone this can blind us to the important differences separating Bean's past examples from his contemporary ones. For one thing, whereas states have for centuries contracted with private intelligence companies to support state security objectives, today's dynamics are more akin to outsourcing than to simply contracting.²⁹ While the latter more explicitly place contractors underneath the regulatory umbrella of public agencies, by contrast outsourcing allows for intelligence gathering practices which play out far beyond the pale of public oversight. Non-state intelligence providers are neither subject to the same constitutional restraints as their state counterparts are, nor are their records accessible through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. What's more, private businesses can also legally contest the governmental disclosure of documents in public FOIA cases if these documents contain information that private companies deem proprietary, and the legal threshold

²⁶ Office of the Director of National Intelligence. *US Intelligence Community Budget*. <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/what-we-do/ic-budget>

²⁷ Hannauer, Larry. (2022). Federal News Network. *Intelligence Agencies Must Transform Acquisition*. <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/commentary/2022/10/intelligence-agencies-must-transform-acquisition/#:~:text=The%20Intelligence%20Community%20spends%20about,from%20satellites%20to%20janitorial%20services.>

²⁸ N.A. (N.D.). Office of the Director of National Intelligence. *Key Facts About Contractors*. <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://irp.fas.org/news/2010/07/ic-contract.pdf>

²⁹ cf. Hamilton Bean's discussion on pgs. 81-87. Bean, Hamilton. *Privatizing intelligence*. The Routledge Handbook of Private Security Services. New York: Routledge, 2015.

for doing so is low. Private companies do not always win in such disclosure cases, although they usually do, but they can still use this tactic to successfully delay the release of records for years on end while court processes unfold.³⁰

Thus, even as the public-private distinction provides for the protection of private intelligence companies from any unwanted public oversight, these same companies nonetheless systematically function within the totality of the contemporary security field as the most significant providers of intelligence products for the governments' various foreign and domestic intelligence agencies. This situation is interpretable as a political condition in which state power expresses itself indirectly, not through Stasi-like forms of ingress into the private sphere but by delegating security governance powers to outside institutions who are themselves unburdened by the constitutional limits placed upon state power through political documents, positive law, and the many cultural narratives which imagine a meaningful distinction between public and private expressions of social power. As this and my previous examples help to reveal, today the distinction between public and private powers is not bending, it is collapsing.

For all of the ways in which global developments in national security cultures at the level of domestic policing and surveillance practices clearly transgress culturally embedded distinctions between the private and public domains, at the same time states can also mobilize border logics to facilitate the expansion of security-sector fusions. The legal scholar Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, for instance, has highlighted the centrality of the immigration control industry to the profit-margins of the world's largest transnational security companies such as G45/Allied Universal, Corrections Corporation of America, and the GeoGroup. Drawing on the

³⁰ For a current example of these dynamics, see Turley, Jeremy and Willis, Adam. "North Dakota Attorney General Says DAPL Documents are Public Record." *InForum*.

financial reports of Serco, a US-based privately held “public services delivery company,” Gammeltoft-Hansen demonstrates that just as profits were starting to stagnate across the prison control industry in the early 2000’s, the governments of the United States, Australia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom together initiated a “second wave” of prison outsourcing contracts with these same companies to help them raise their stagnating profit margins.³¹ The results of this second wave of prison outsourcing were two-fold. On the one hand, it successfully broke the profit stagnation problem that privately run incarceration management companies were then experiencing; but on the other hand, “by delegating authority [over migrant populations] to private actors, states were able to release themselves- *de facto* and *de jure*- from obligations otherwise owed” to immigrants and asylum seekers under national and international law (207).³² Thus with respect to the management of migrant populations we see yet another example of how the legal distinction between public and private domains has become increasingly blurred throughout the 21st century. The distinction between the two domains may linger in the political imagination, but in reality, it has become more nostalgic than empirically accurate.

The truth of this observation is amplified considerably when we consider additional examples of how contemporary security-sector fusions are now undercutting the meaning and substantive content of the public-private distinction. In the following examples, however, the point of emphasis shifts away from domestic scenes and moves instead into the many overseas contexts in which nation-states utilize transnational security actors to achieve state military objectives. In these contexts, again, what stands out is the degree to which states have sought to achieve putatively public policies through recourse to the private sector rather than executing

³¹ Gammeltoft-Hansen, Thomas. *Private Security and the Prison Control Industry*.

³² *Ibid.*

them through state agencies. Erbel and Kinsey, for example, provide a very clear window into this important shift through their study of the differences between past and present forms of military logistics support operations. As they initially suggest, security scholarship often neglects the importance of military logistics operations for states' geopolitical strategies and ground-level military tactics as well as for international relations theory more generally, and this lacuna has prevented many observers from fully appreciated the true scope of military outsourcing practices in the 21st century (71).³³ By analyzing US State Department budgets for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, they demonstrate that despite the historical continuities linking present outsourcing trends to their historical precursors, the sheer scale of states' logistics outsourcing practices in the 21st century renders any such comparisons an exercise in merely contrasting apples to oranges. By the numbers, the ratios of private contractors to US military personnel in the conduct of overseas logistics support operations during previous wars were 1:20 during WW1, 1:7 in World War II, and 1:6 throughout the war in Vietnam. However, during the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, these ratios underwent a radical reversal. At the low end, they were 1:1, but over time they increased to a ratio of 2:1 (71-72).³⁴ Looking at these same numbers, McFate flatly comments there are no historical analogues whatsoever throughout the entirety of the modern period. In fact, one must return to the "mediated military markets" of the 17th and 18th centuries to locate any comparable antecedents.³⁵ In other words, the logistical conduct of warfare in the 21st century more resembles the interstate conflicts of the

³³ Erbel, Mark., Kinsey, Christopher. *Privatizing Military Logistics*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ McFate, Sean. 31, 40, 99.

pre-modern era, before the ascendance and solidification of the modern public-private distinction.

The sociologist Vron Ware's study of the work performed by "military migrant laborers" for the military logistics support industry presents us with another looking glass through which to view the contemporary (ir-)relevance of the public-private distinction for interpreting national security cultures.³⁶ For definitional purposes, military migrants are migrant laborers employed by the US, UK, and many other national militaries to service their logistics and operations support needs abroad, and in the 21st century, as Ware puts it, they have become "indispensable" to the conduct of militaries' overseas operations. There are at least three noteworthy dimensions that attend to such arrangements. First, migrant laborers working for state militaries are subject to military oversight and control, and because they are indirectly hired by states through offshored transnational private security firms, they do not enjoy the same labor protections as would state employees. Second, it is common for transnational recruitment vendors to organize the diverse ethnicities and racial groups which constitute militaries' migrant labor pools into job tasks based on their perceived racial and ethnic 'fitness' for certain kinds of work. Finally, militaries' recent decisions to drastically increase their reliance of third-party military recruitment vendors raises complex questions about national belonging and citizenship. In the UK and the US, military service has historically been a path to citizenship for many immigrants. However, contemporary subcontracting arrangements now allow states to decouple military service from access to citizenship. In brief, Ware's analyses suggest that the transnationalization of national security cultures will increasingly detach military powers from the political and legal structures

³⁶ Ware, Vron. *Military Migrants and Mercenary Markets*.

historically constitutive of nation-state formations, and this further implies that the transnational exercise of state power is today becoming similarly decoupled from the categories of the private versus the public interest.

With regard to the lived experiences of transnational military migrant laborers, the anthropologist Maya Mynster Christensen offers an illuminating ethnographic study documenting the first-person impacts of this transnationalization of national security cultures.³⁷ Her study follows the lives of Sierra Leonean ex-militia members first recruited in 2009 by the UK-based private security firm Sabre International to perform facilities guarding services for US military bases in Iraq. Sabre's initial recruitment campaign, which was undertaken with support from the Sierra Leonean government, offered promises of major earnings as well as job skill development to potential recruits. To further pique the interests of young men, it also incorporated strategic messaging suggesting that serving the US military in Iraq would help them to development a masculine identity constructed around a culturally specific notion of becoming a family breadwinner and traditional warrior-hero. For security reasons, however, the recruits were not actually allowed to view the terms of their contracts prior to deployment. When they were finally deployed to Iraq roughly one year later, they learned that after recruiter fees, various national taxes, equipment costs, room and board and travel expenses, and other deductions were factored in, their take home pay would be less than \$200/month. Additionally, once they got to Iraq they discovered they were not to become security guards as promised, but would instead be mostly employed as janitors and cooks and only occasionally as tower guards. The recruits responded to this news by attempting a labor strike, but the US military was intolerant of their

³⁷ Christensen, Maya Mynster. *The Underbelly of Global Security: Sierra Leonean Ex-Militias in Iraq*.

protests and simply deported them without pay three weeks after their arrival in Baghdad. This anecdote helps to underscore the fact that contemporary military privatization trends not only decouple the category of the public from state military objectives, but they also mobilize military labor in ways that amalgamate the public and private and the foreign and the domestic.

As both Ware's and Christensen's studies show, albeit in different ways, political states now largely depend upon the private sector to recruit and organize the transnational military labor pools they require for servicing their military operations overseas and to such an extent that, as I am again reinforcing, it makes little sense to claim that the public-private distinction maintains representational validity as the organizing principle of national security cultures. Rather, the latter are now more a heterogenous combination of transnationally organized private economic interests admixed with dislocated labor pools than they are institutions comprised of individuals sharing a sense of national identity, purpose, or belonging. As I have sought to demonstrate, from the conduct of warfare to the policing and surveillance of domestic populations, from the management of incarcerated populations to intelligence gathering practices and beyond public and private powers have thoroughly hybridized in the 21st century and in the process created novel institutional alignments and configurations which bely standard legal and political coordinates associated with the public-private distinction, especially within liberal societies. Echoing my conclusions from the last chapter, while such patterns of entanglement between the public and the private and the foreign and the domestic may draw upon historical antecedents, their current scope marks them as novel historical developments rather than a straightforward repetition of past dynamics.

What to make of these and the many other examples showing the empirical decay of traditional expressions of the public-private distinction as it relates to states' organization and expression of their modern monopolies over coercive and surveillance authorities? In the next section, I answer this question by framing contemporary security-sector fusions as resulting from a prior series of historical pressures and contingencies which collectively drove liberal states to abandon their previous policies and conceptual frameworks. These explanatory readings stress how force hybridization trends were initially a pragmatic response to domestic and global political pressures, yet more to my purposes in this dissertation project, they also cast security governance trends as more recently having evolved beyond states' capacities to regulate or direct them. Overall, these final analyses are necessary because they will allow me to cross over from this chapter's empirical accounts of contemporary security-sector trends and toward a more sustained discussion in the next chapter of their theoretical implications for the future of nation states and regimes of democratic, liberal governance.

The Etiology of Security-Sector Fusions

From one critical perspective, the above examples of force contracting practices imply that the boundaries between the public and private domains need to be reasserted more forcefully within liberal societies, perhaps through more stringent local, national, and international regulatory frameworks. As a rule, such approaches bemoan the perceived anti-democratic implications of contemporary security governance trends and foreground the threats such developments present to constitutional rights and systems of public oversight.³⁸ Relatedly, thus

³⁸ I do not develop the point further here, but as a possible counter to these perceptions of the putatively intrinsically anti-democratic implications of contemporary force privatization movements Jacques Derrida's *Two Essays on*

do public sector advocates such as the legal scholar Eric T. Freyfogle critique the rising power of private landowners over formerly public topographies as trends that are anathema to the public good.³⁹ I do not think these approaches are wrong *per se*, it's just that, as I explain more in the next chapter, they seem to operate within theoretical cul-de-sacs and do not allow us to think more trenchantly about the public-private distinction itself. To what are we blinded when we so reify the public domain as to try to imagine it in balance with the private sphere, as "common ground" as Freyfogle puts it? Is an imaginary balance between the private and public domains, if indeed it could ever be attained, truly the antidote to the excesses of the private sphere?^{40,41} In short, when we cease our critical engagement with the public-private distinction at the level of the distinction itself such a stopping point reifies the framework in ways that are ill-equipped for tarrying with the intimacies linking the very notion of the public good to the modern public nation-state as a historical development that was and remains embroiled in agonies, contradictions, and conflicts.

By means of a separate critical approach, I suggest that by continuously framing security-sector trends within wider current debates about whether they are weakening democratic

Reason (2004) comments extensively on the structurally necessary anti-democratic core of democracy as a political form. In doing so, Derrida boldly went against the grain of then-dominant leftist discourses decrying the War on Terror and the invasion of Iraq as essentially signifying 'undemocratic' political developments. Against these complaints, Derrida argued the suspension of democratic principles is inherent to the democratic form itself and cannot be averted if democracies are to survive. This is not to say that Derrida supported the War on Terror or the invasion of Iraq; rather, he was acerbically reminding the political and intellectual left that democracy itself always represents a unique form of terror and that its historical development from out of the ancient world and into the contemporary period has always been marked by violent ruptures and moments of undivided sovereignty.

³⁹ Freyfogle, Eric T. *On private property: finding common ground on the ownership of land*.

⁴⁰ One might ask Kim Tallbear, Robert Warrior, or Phillip Deloria whether such a balance might reflect a condition of progress. For further reading on the subject of the ideal of common ownership, see Gonzales, Mario. *The Black Hills: The Sacred Land of the Lakota and Tsistsistas* in *Native American Voices: A Reader*, Third Edition. Ed. Susan Lobo, Steve Talbot, Traci Morris. Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

⁴¹ See also, Harmon, Alex. 'Shenandoah National Park and the Racialization of Progress.' *Contested Commemoration in US History: Diverging Public Interpretations* (2019): 14-33.

institutions, we may only be stranding our thinking within a conceptual framework that is increasingly out of touch with the empirical realities of 21st century forms of political and economic organization as well as the emerging technologies, security-sector hybridizations, and bureaucratic inventions which accompany them. The modern public-private distinction was born in time, and therefore it can die in time; and even if, like the shadow of the Buddha on the wall of some cave, to use the Nietzschean expression, this distinction continues to linger in the political imagination this would not rule out the possibility of its having become a vestigial organ of governance, modernity's appendix.⁴² In the next chapter, I will focus more on theorizing the political significances of contemporary force privatization movements, but for now, the concrete, empirical realities are in any case not complex. Within a single generation societies around the globe have completely normalized security-sector hybridizations. Consequently, the traditional institutional boundaries once marking off things public from things private are dissolving.

In this section, I develop an etiology of contemporary force privatization movements to show how they involve multiple, intersecting lines of economic, political, cultural, ideological, and technological influence. These lines of influence are deeply entangled with one another, rendering any linear, unidimensional explanatory narratives into Procrustean beds that will only diminish the complexity of the matter. Thus, what matters here is the capacity to envision multiple lines of influence as fundamentally related, as mutually constitutive developments that by turns intentionally and unintentionally have caused the total field of contemporary security governance practices to take shape as they have.

⁴² Book 3. §108 of *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche, Frederick. 1882, 1887.

Beginning with functional accounts, so-called because of their tendency to treat security-sector fusions as at bottom rational responses to historical contingencies, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War represent undeniable benchmarks on the way toward understanding the recent history of contemporary security-sector transformations. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the United States and its NATO allies could no longer justify their previous levels of state military expenditures and overseas troop deployments before domestic and international audiences. Similarly, nations which had been allied with or under the direct control of, or economically dependent upon, the Soviet Union could no longer count on Moscow for military and economic support. In this environment national security budgets dipped precipitously around the globe.⁴³ In the US context, according to data collected by the World Bank between 1990 and 2000 the US national defense budget dropped by more than 40% in terms of military spending as a percentage of national GDP.⁴⁴ And in terms of absolute dollar amounts, it declined by more than \$25 billion during the same time period.⁴⁵ These budget cuts also coincided with dramatic decreases in overseas troop deployments. In 1990, there were some 600,000 active-duty US military personnel stationed overseas, but by 1999 that figure declined to less than 210,000.⁴⁶ But even as troop deployments fell, in the same time period US military engagements overseas climbed sharply. Between 1960 and 1991, the US Army conducted 10 such ‘operational events,’ but in the seven years between 1991 and 1998 there were 26 of them.

⁴³ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*, 43-44.

⁴⁴ The World Bank. *Military Expenditures (%GDP)- United States*.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Mcfate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*, 43

The US Marine Corp carried out 15 military operations between 1982 and 1989, but between 1989 and 2014 it carried out at least 62.⁴⁷ What explains these changes?

McFate contends that in combination with sharp increases to the number of overseas US military operations this simultaneous retrenchment in global security budgets and decrease in the number of deployed military personnel contributed to the emergence of numerous post-Cold War security vacuums which, in turn, spurred an increase in the number of regional conflicts and geopolitical realignments as the Cold War political order unraveled. These changes, McFate continues, forced populations and governments around the world to re-invent their national security cultures and to search for innovative solutions to financing them.⁴⁸ From this macro-political perspective, at least one reason why security-sector fusions began to take root following the end of the Cold War was they stepped in to fill governments' and businesses' perceived security needs at a time when regional instabilities were on the rise. In other words, a matrix of historical contingencies created ideal market conditions for the expansion of non-state security actors and once this ball got rolling it could not be stopped. The lesson we can draw from this analysis, I think, is that political, economic, climactic, and any other forms of current or anticipated social instability are rather good for the business of non-state security actors, and this pattern will no doubt continue to be the case in the future.

Alongside global political transformations taking shape in the wake of the Cold War, world-altering technological advancements in areas ranging from the data sciences to engineering and computing, telecommunications, weaponry, and many other areas as well also contributed significantly to the rise of non-state force actors in the 21st century. The cultural

⁴⁷ Ibid, 44.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 41-49.

impacts of these technological changes are as broad and deep, but as they relate to contemporary security-sector fusions these changes have played an especially important role. In a relatively brief span of time, recent and ongoing technological revolutions have resulted in radical bureaucratic and philosophical changes to the organization of governments, markets, militaries, and societies and psyches around the world. With respect to the organization of state militaries, scholars working in the field of security studies have generally viewed it beneath the general rubric of the modern Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). International business relations scholar Anna Leander helpfully defines the RMA in the introduction to *Routledge Handbook of Private Security Studies* “as the integration of innovations in information technologies into the defense sector... requiring a profound transformation of the entire organization of the armed forces and their relationship to private companies and the global market” (3).⁴⁹ Leander further suggests that the scale of contemporary force hybridization movements simply cannot be understood apart from the RMA. Militaries have always sought to develop and integrate new technologies into their war fighting strategies and practices; however, there are nonetheless key differences between these past examples and examples associated with the RMA. These differences converge on the fact that the technical requirements requisite to the everyday functioning of state militaries in the 21st century necessitate unprecedented levels of private sector integration into public military forces. For example, Erbel and Kinsey have estimated that in the aggregate 21st century militaries require a total force structure comprised of twice as many private operators as the number of traditional so-called ‘core competency’ public military personnel. And in certain cases, such as in the use of drone warfare, this ratio can climb to as

⁴⁹ Abrahamsen, Rita and Leander, Anna. *Introduction to the The Routledge Handbook of Private Security Studies*.

high as 180:1.⁵⁰ The rapid expansion of security-sector fusions, therefore, owes very much to the extent and pace of technological change.

Both the RMA in particular and the technological character of contemporary life more generally have thus forced states to re-orient and re-organize the methods and goals of social production as a fundamental condition for remaining regionally or globally competitive, economically, militarily, diplomatically, and in every other respect as well. As the historian Miriam Dunn Caveltly has argued, nowhere else is the relationship between the RMA, social production, and security-sector reform more transparent than in the domains of computing and cybersecurity.⁵¹ Caveltly highlights how the private sector has been and continues to be very far ahead of its public sector counterparts in its ability to understand, develop, and operationalize emerging technologies, and it also maintains advantages in terms of its funding capacities. Thus, as technological changes have advanced, political states have increasingly needed to rely on the private sector to accommodate their perceived security needs.⁵² But this is of course a two-way street. To whatever extent technological changes have forced political states to rely on the private sector, by the same token the private sector has also come to increasingly depend on political states in so far as the latter have permitted the former's accumulation of the raw materials and cross-cultural relationships required to sustain these ongoing technological revolutions. In other words the resources, trade networks, and international relations which the private sector has needed to sustain its technological and economic growth all had to be acquired as a precondition for their successes. In light of their radically increased levels of mutual dependence, then, both

⁵⁰ Erbel, Mark and Kinsey, Christopher. *Privatizing Military Logistics*. 71-73.

⁵¹ Caveltly, Myriam Dunn. *Cyber-security and private actors*.

⁵² *Ibid*, 89-99.

domains have needed to destabilize their discreet social identities as separate legal, political, and cultural domains and work instead toward enhancing the degree and contents of public-private sector partnerships. In this framing, the 21st century creation of cyber-commands by most state military bureaucracies is unsurprising; for as a rule, the public security sector has needed to cultivate and maintain closer and closer partnerships with globalized technology firms. Therefore, rapid and profound technological advancements played a major role in the proliferation of contemporary security-sector hybridizations, and they will continue to do so. Desirable or not, the breakneck pace of technological change forces nation-states and their militaries to increasingly outsource various security functions to the private sector.

In addition to such functionalist historical accounts, scholars concerned with understanding relatively recent and broad changes to local, national, and global security governance cultures have also identified economic drivers as a separate set of contributing factors. There are both empirical and ideological dimensions to consider here, although the lines separating those two dimensions can sometimes blur. As Erbel and Kinsey argue, justifications for security-sector hybridizations typically hinge on the claim that the private sector offers economic advantages to states (74-76).⁵³ More specifically, the exact claim is that private sector military and policing units present policy makers at different levels of governance with a cost-savings alternative to more expensive public military and policing options. Often, this argument is supplemented by an additional claim that not only is the private sector cheaper, but it is also more efficient and can perform tasks equivalent to if not better than its public sector counterparts. This argument is especially compelling during times of economic recession and

⁵³ Erbel, Mark and Kinsey, Christopher. *Privatizing Military Logistics*.

stagnation. At least within the US context, governing bodies at the municipal and county levels have for a variety of reasons experienced consistently declining federal economic supports since the mid-1980's, and in such contexts these 'cost savings' arguments have been very persuasive. While declines in federal funding began to stabilize around 1990, the amount of federal funding available for local and county-level governments has never returned to its previous levels.⁵⁴ Therefore, just as the decline of US state military forces and budgets following the end of the Cold War helped spur the growth of global force privatization movements abroad, so too did contemporaneous decreases in federal tax allocations to local-level governments also open up additional market possibilities for non-state security actors.

However, whether security outsourcing does in fact save governments money is alternately true or false depending on the context and numerous other methodological contingencies. On their own, cost-savings arguments remain hotly contested, and not least of all because both critics and supporters of contemporary security contracting practices maintain profound disagreements over how to draw the relevant comparisons, which services and activities should be counted as falling beneath the public or private umbrella, and what the relevant timelines of comparison should be for any given study.⁵⁵ When the US Congressional Budget Office retrospectively analyzed the cost of fielding a unit of US Army regulars during the Iraq war versus the cost of fielding a similarly sized unit of Blackwater contractors to perform roughly equivalent tasks, they found that "the Army's total cost of operating [such a unit]... in

⁵⁴ Randall, Megan. Urban Institute and Brookings Institution. *Census of Governments Illustrates Declining Aid to Localities, Other Trends in State and Local*. See Tables 1 and 2 and Randall's analysis of them in Paragraph 3.

⁵⁵ Cf. McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*, Chapter 5; Cf. Erbel, Mark, and Kinsey, Christopher. *Privatizing Military Logistics*. 70-78.

Iraq was \$110 million dollars, while hiring... a Blackwater unit ... was only \$99 million” (47).⁵⁶ Yet when analyses are expanded outward to include a wider swath of military functions, researchers sometimes arrive at very different answers. In 2012, the US-based NGO Project on Government Oversight performed a systematic review of 35 military domains each of which contained examples of both federally and privately managed units performing roughly equivalent tasks, and they concluded that in 33 of the 35 domains they examined government employees cost less than their private sector counterparts.⁵⁷ Plus, as the US government’s own internal investigations have shown the US State Department’s use of private contractors during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan led to more than \$60 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse, with tens of billions of dollars vanishing entirely.⁵⁸ These examples may be far from comprehensive, but they nevertheless well indicate that any generalized claims about the economic benefits of outsourcing security functions to private vendors are overstated.

But even if there were a preponderance of cases in which the evidence for cost-savings was compelling, it is also important to remember that economic arguments never occur in a vacuum. To take an extreme example, slavery and child labor both might generate immense profits for companies, but we do not generally conclude that these practices are therefore acceptable, either for governments or for privately managed institutions. Economic arguments concerning force privatization movements, in other words, are never solely about the numbers; instead, they entail a variety of explicit or implicit philosophical positions concerning the ends of social governance, the ethical treatment of persons, and what the role of governments versus

⁵⁶ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*.

⁵⁷ Erbel, Mark and Kinsey, Christopher. *Privatizing Military Logistics*.

⁵⁸ *The Final Report of the US Government Commission on Wartime Contracting: Transforming Wartime Contracting, Controlling Costs, Reducing Risks*. Congressional Report.

transnational organizations should be in regulating the treatment of persons by private business interests. Correspondingly, observers of security-sector fusions have also drawn attention to the fact that various philosophical and intellectual movements which long predate both the end of the Cold War and the RMA, let alone contemporary privatization trends more broadly, have influenced policy makers at every level of governance. As Leander has noted, all of the aforementioned security-sector developments “went hand in hand with... the increasing role of neoliberal forms of governance [and] neither the RMA, nor the related reorganization of the relationships between the state and the private sector, is conceivable without the growing dominance of neoliberal economic models and the neoliberal emphasis on privatization and the outsourcing of previously public goods and services” (3).⁵⁹ Abrahamsen and Williams add, “it is impossible to understand the growth and pervasiveness of private security without considering the contemporary dominance of neoliberal modes of governance... The result has been a general move away from vertically integrated, hierarchical, and state-centered structures of service provision characteristic of the welfare state towards more diverse, horizontally linked complexes of actors (60).”⁶⁰ Consequently, although I have already discussed the supervenience relation between neoliberalism and the evolution of security governance paradigms in the introduction to this dissertation, it is also important to reflect on how ideological and philosophical positions have influenced the recent development of privatization trends within liberal societies.

The impacts of neoliberal economic theory on security practices are too many and complex to be adduced here. Yet in all cases, such impacts result from two core tenants of neoliberal governmentality. First, the idea that the private sector is more nimble, efficient,

⁵⁹ Abrahamsen, Rita and Leander, Anna. *Introduction to the Routledge Handbook of Private Security Studies*.

⁶⁰ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*.

innovative, and capable than the government at performing a variety of tasks has been massively influential among both policymakers and the general public and led many to believe that the more that governments can stay out of the way of markets, the better off everyone will be. In this view, governments ought to be more concerned about the production and management of market conditions than with moral, ethical, religious, or other sorts of values. The second core belief of neoliberal governmentality is a consequence of the first. It is the idea that the goods and services once provided through the public sector should be reconceptualized as market commodities and opportunities for further economic growth. Therefore, public services should be transferred over to the private sector. All of that said, there are still underlying logics which help to motivate this first set of beliefs. As Frederik Hayek famously argued in the 1944 text *The Road to Serfdom*, too much social reliance upon the public sector will inexorably lead populations toward ever greater degrees of dependance upon, and hence also greater degrees of subservience to, their governments.⁶¹ By continuously empowering governments in this way, they will necessarily and inevitably become authoritarian; their powers will become uncontestable; and as a result, individual freedoms will suffer. According to Hayek, eventually this process must culminate in the end of the tradition of classical liberalism, and it will lead to the termination of the rights of the private sphere. In Hayek's later work, in the 1966 *The Principles of a Liberal Social Order*, for instance, he further argued that absent the strong political reassertion of private property rights popular democratic movements would despite their best intentions undermine the important historical gains of the private sphere and would lead to the reassertion of pre-modern

⁶¹ Hayek, Frederick. *The Road to Serfdom*.

forms of totalitarian rule.⁶² For Hayek, American democracy no less than Soviet Communism needed containment, and liberalism was the barricade.⁶³

While Hayek is but one possible point of reference in the historical development of neoliberal ideology, his ideas are nonetheless representative of the ideological origins of contemporary security-sector fusions. Long before the RMA and the end of the Cold War, philosophical influences were changing how people think about the future of public services. Public goods and services such as health care, education, transportation, water infrastructures and more were increasingly constructed as latent existential threats to the future of liberalism, a stable democratic order, and most of all, private property rights. In this intellectual and political environment, security itself became increasingly thinkable as both a market product and as a bulwark against excessive government overreach, and individuals, businesses, and communities began to think of themselves as consumers of security products rather than recipients of state protection.

In the security studies literature, these trends have propelled a wider social process sometimes referred to as *responsibilization*, or “a process whereby individuals, communities, businesses and other actors come to accept substantial responsibility for their own safety and security... [and] the choice to participate in the [security market] becomes the mark of responsible civic behavior” (67-68).⁶⁴ Likewise, Michael C. Williams reads responsibilization trends as “linked in important ways to wider social and cultural transformations including

⁶² Hayek, Friedrich. *The Principles of a Liberal Social Order*.

⁶³ In an article analyzing Hayek’s political philosophy, Benjamin Selwyn argues that Hayek’s “ideas are a justification for the erosion of democracy under capitalism in defense of private property.” Of note here is Selwyn’s analysis of Hayek’s support for the Pinochet regime.

⁶⁴ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*.

changing attitudes toward crime and punishment and the pervasiveness of various mentalities of risk” (133).⁶⁵ From both perspectives, neoliberalism does not simply impact security cultures through overt policy decisions, but it also becomes productive of individual and group desires for enhanced security amidst ceaseless narratives of danger and insecurity.⁶⁶ Emerging mentalities of risk in turn produce new discursive norms around ‘cyber security,’ ‘food security,’ ‘energy security,’ and so on until these speech acts themselves lead to the internalization of security narratives as central to the identity of both individuals and communities. Through the internalization of security narratives, subjects’ identities, self-perceived social roles and responsibilities, and their ideas and ideals around legal and supererogatory obligations to those near and far change considerably; and in that sense, processes of responsabilization become understandable as both the cause and the consequence of widespread perceptions of the future as an essentially insecure abode and thus also place new limits on our collective capacities to imagine alternative forms of social cooperation that might actually be able to address these insecurities in both their real and illusory aspects. In any case, perceptions of the future as an intrinsically insecure environment grant to security companies and emerging security governance trends a new role in society as the latter become increasingly viewed as the primary vector for local resilience in the face of quasi-eschatological future imaginaries. Responsibilization thus also drives security privatization trends into the future and helps to naturalize their social

⁶⁵ Williams, Michael C. *Global Security Assemblages*.

⁶⁶ In line with the idea of security as an emergent commodity-form, Abrahamsen and Williams add to their analysis by highlighting recent business mergers between the fashion and security industries. As one spokesperson for the fashion industry put it, the goal is to make security “good looking” (77). Here, the desire for security transcends the meaning imparted to it by Maslow and becomes a lifestyle garnishment. Guarding services are increasingly demanded by wealthy tourists and thus international travel has become another mechanism for growth in the security industry. The travel industry hires transnational laborers to protect tourist enclaves from locals who are themselves rendered immobile in their own homelands by the influx of security guards and tourists.

reproduction as security-conscious individuals and communities increasingly view security as a social obligation rather than as a social right guaranteed through institutions of public governance. So much the worse for those who cannot afford it.

There is also another way in which security narratives contribute to expanding security-sector fusions. Under the anodyne name of ‘community policing’ models, social actors on both sides of the public-private distinction now increasingly co-produce their local security environments by merging together public and private security actors to achieve the security objectives of persons and institutions who do not always represent the entire population within a given *socius*. On this account, responsabilization mobilizes security-sector fusions by leading private business interests to understand themselves as co-producers of community security rather than as recipients of a public good called state security. Beginning with a local example, in January of 2021 the city of Missoula, Montana mobilized a network of public and private institutions to build political support for the use of federal Covid relief dollars to hire Rogers International, a newly minted private security company, to manage the city’s homeless population rather than continue to depend on the city’s already overstretched public police department. Rogers’ employees, whose personal identities are protected and who are as privately employed personnel not subject to the same constitutional restraints as public police officers, patrol neighborhoods, monitor the homeless population, and provide security guarding services at local homeless shelters and a designated homeless encampment. In Johannesburg, South Africa, to take a second example, security within the downtown business district is no longer provided through the public police at all but is instead maintained through a collaborative

network consisting of private security actors, local businesses, and transnational corporations.⁶⁷ Finally, activist resistance campaigns intent on halting the expansion of North American pipeline infrastructures are today routinely policed, surveilled, managed, and disrupted through parallel security-sector fusions.⁶⁸ Each of these examples further underscores the ambiguity of the public-private distinction in the 21st century, and they also help to connect the philosophical origins of neoliberalism to everyday security practices in the present.

Economic, technological, and ideological explanations for the 21st century expansion of security-sector fusions also dovetail with political calculations at every step. In today's world, security and military privatization trends are truly a globalized phenomenon, but as McFate has observed, the United States deserves special attention in the study of their etiology, for it was in the US context that policy adjustments were translated into ever-increasing economic inputs into these industries. Beginning in the late 1990's, sudden and massive investments into the private security and military industries by the US catalyzed a pre-existing although market-limited business sector by providing it with the financial grounding and, even more importantly, the normative legitimacy that was required for its subsequent global expansion.⁶⁹

According to the journalist Mark Perry, this aspect of the story begins not with the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, but in 1986 when the US Congress passed the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act, a commonly forgotten but nonetheless massively influential piece of legislation that dramatically rewrote the legal rules surrounding the military chain of command. As Perry narrates, this legislation inserted the Secretary of Defense

⁶⁷ Diphorn, Tessa. *Who Do You Call? Private Security Policing in Durban, South Africa*.

⁶⁸ Brown, Alleen, Will Parrish, and Alice Speri. 'Leaked Documents Reveal Counterterrorism Tactics Used at Standing Rock to 'Defeat Pipeline Insurgencies,' *The Intercept*.

⁶⁹ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*. Chapters 3,4, 5, and 6.

between the President and the heads of the military services in the overall military chain of command.⁷⁰ “Under the new arrangement,” the journalist comments, “the chain of command now went from the President to the Secretary of Defense, and then to the military” so that, for the first time in US history, “the chain of command now bypassed the Joint Chiefs of Staff entirely. They commanded no one” (xiv).⁷¹ Initially billed as a legislative solution to the political and bureaucratic infighting then common among branches of the US military, or what was politely referred to as issues of ‘interoperability,’ the Goldwater-Nichols Act empowered the Secretary of Defense to assert greater control over the organization and conduct of the US military, and this organizational change was to have unforeseen but far reaching consequences for the future of US military engagements abroad.⁷²

Looking ahead to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to the War on Terror more generally, the extent to which each of these conflicts were privatized would have been unlikely to take place without this important piece of legislation. Indeed, although there are exceptions throughout these conflicts military leaders consistently advocated for increased troop deployments while the Office of the Secretary of Defense under Donald Rumsfeld insisted on the contrary policy option of outsourcing public military functions to the private sector.⁷³ This political maneuver helped to insulate administrations against public criticism because, for one, it allowed political leaders to minimize military casualties before the critical eyes of the public. The US military does not report contractor deaths or injuries in its official casualty lists, even though by 2010 contractor injuries and deaths began outpacing those of public military

⁷⁰ Perry, Mark. *The Pentagon's Wars*.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid., Chapter 1.

⁷³ Ibid., Chapters 6 and 7.

personnel.⁷⁴ Furthermore, military outsourcing also helped to decrease the duration of troop deployments and it reduced both public and congressional oversight over military operations at strategic and tactical levels.⁷⁵ From these few examples, we can begin to see just some of the ways in which political considerations have influenced the growth of contemporary force privatization movements.

Circling back to post-Cold War exigencies, even before the War on Terror we can see these dynamics already taking shape within the foreign policy thinking of the Clinton administration. In addition to the aforementioned retrenchment of national security budgets and overseas troop deployments during the 1990's, a series of domestic and international political calculations were made that helped to set the stage for increased reliance upon the private military industry in the future. Following Perry's detailed historical review of US military-civilian relations in *The Pentagon's Wars: The Military's Undeclared War against American Presidents*, while the end of the Cold War was broadly celebrated as an historic triumph for democracy and liberalism, this victory also led to a "national identity crisis" within political and military circles about the future of the US military amidst a massively reconfigured international order. Thus, even as the so-called Washington consensus was beginning to emerge at the level of international politics, behind the scenes the State Department, first under Warren Christopher and then under Madeline Albright, was nonetheless struggling mightily to formulate a coherent foreign policy framework that could satisfy both the US public and military leadership.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*. see Table Figures 3.2 and 3.3, "Percent Breakdown of US Casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan"

⁷⁵ For a discussion of how private military contractors contribute to the opacity of military operations, see McFate, Chapter 5.

⁷⁶ Perry, Mark. *The Pentagon's Wars*. Prologue.

As a result, the Clinton administration experimented clumsily with a multitude of foreign policy approaches ranging from humanitarian intervention to isolationism, and both rank-and-file military personnel as well as many of the military's most influential leaders began to feel as if the military was becoming a political pawn for the Clinton administration's domestic political ambitions.⁷⁷ As the US seesawed between foreign policy frameworks throughout the 1990's, civilian and military leaders experienced constant and frequently rancorous disagreement, both across and within their respective institutions.⁷⁸ These policy disagreements were pragmatically reflected in what Perry refers to as the "tragic triptych" of 1990's US foreign policy— Haiti, Somalia, and Rwanda. These interventions, or lack thereof, only created what Perry calls a "profound sense of lurching, a mix of intervention and hesitation that brought on waves of public criticism" (71) as there seemed to be no overarching foreign policy framework capable of, on the one hand, placating the various constituencies now embroiled in ideological conflict, and on the other hand, coherently addressing the multitude of global pressures now confronting the world's sole remaining superpower.⁷⁹ From within this ambiguous political environment, however, one policy option emerged that seemed capable of synthesizing the needs of many disagreeing factions: private military contracting.

In an environment of political dissensus and soured relations between civilian and military leadership, the private sector emerged as a novel technocratic solution because it

⁷⁷ Such concerns were amplified within military circles when the Clinton Administration invoked the Goldwater-Nichols Act as a legal basis to assert new rules which prevented recruiters and commanding officers from inquiring about the sexual orientation of service members— the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy. From the military's point of view, Perry explains, not only was the Clinton administration continuously disregarding their advice on foreign policy matters, but it was now also using its political authority to force undesired cultural changes within its ranks in order to gain votes in domestic political elections.

⁷⁸ Perry, Mark. *The Pentagon's Wars*. Chapters 2-5

⁷⁹ Ibid.

provided civilian leaders with an option to achieve their publicly stated policy objectives without garnering too much criticism and, at the same time, it allowed them to assuage military commanders who were concerned over committing resources and personnel toward conflicts they believed were either unnecessarily risky or immaterial to national security. The US-led NATO military interventions into Kosovo in 1998 and 1999 are the important case in point here. Although the Clinton administration initially enjoyed widespread public and military support for the air campaign that successfully forced a stalemate between Serbian and KLA forces, following the US experience in Mogadishu both the US public and military leaders recoiled at the thought of committing US ground forces to a longer-term peacekeeping mission in the region.⁸⁰ Yet military commanders also did not believe that air power alone would permanently end the conflict, and they advised world leaders that the viability of the Kumanova Treaty ultimately depended on long-term troop commitments in the region. Given these competing pressures, the State Department under Madeline Albright turned to DynCorp and MPRI, both military contracting companies, to act as ‘peace supervisors’ in the region, and to train the KLA into a regional stabilizing force. DynCorp personnel were also contracted to support domestic policing functions in Kosovo.⁸¹ NATO, meanwhile, fielded a contingent of international troops made up of soldiers from 43 different nations, but this contingent included a mere ~500 US troops. Thus, by turning to the private sector, the Clinton administration achieved its policy objectives without committing a substantial number of US ground forces to the region, and both the US public and military leaders were generally satisfied with the result. For these reasons, the United States holds a special place in the recent history of security-sector fusions.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Chapter 4.

⁸¹ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*. Chapter 5.

Summary and Transition

To summarize this chapter, the study of contemporary security-sector fusions reveals that we can no longer interpret the social organization of coercive powers and authorities across both foreign and domestic contexts through the long familiar framework of the public-private distinction. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that whereas the differences between public and private versions of policing and military service were much clearer throughout the latter half of the 20th century, in the 21st century these differences have become increasingly opaque. Next, I offered an etiology of contemporary security-sector fusions to help explain some of the forces and ideas that gave rise to them. Based on these reflections, I conclude that the public and private sectors have merged over the past quarter century to such an extent that they no longer constitute distinct legal, political, or conceptual domains. But what would it mean to think about political future outside of the public-private distinction, at least outside of the public-private distinction as it is constructed within the liberal political imaginary? The near- and long-term consequences of their hybridization are uncertain. In the next chapter, therefore, I will turn to current work from across the disciplinary spectrum to provide theoretical and practical orientation in these matters.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THEORIZING SECURITY-SECTOR FUSIONS AS NATION-
STATE ENTROPYChapter Introduction

Relationships between political forms and policing and military powers are always evolving. When I considered the deeper history of the social organization of coercive powers and authorities in Chapter 2, I showed how changing security governance paradigms once facilitated the development of modern political and legal logics; and then, in Chapter 3, I showed that the social structure of security governance began to shift significantly in the years leading up to the 21st century and that it has since undergone yet more radical redefinition. But while that redefinition is empirically undeniable, the question of how best to interpret diverse global processes of change within the social structure of security governance remains. In the last chapter, I claimed contemporary security-sector fusions actively deconstruct the public-private distinction, but throughout this project I have also gestured at the idea that contemporary security-sector fusions also have important consequences for the nation-state system. It is now time to develop that claim. As I will be arguing here, so tight are the connections between modernity's core legal and political logics that, in addition to the latter-day eclipse of the public-private distinction, security-sector fusions equally index the sublation of the nation-state system. But if the flip side of deconstruction is always some form of reconstruction, then the remaking of political insides and outsides by the sculpting hands of security-sector fusions will also drive the production of alternative forms of social and political mobilization. In short, I am suggesting that

the more public and private security governance structures and practices hybridize, the more the pressures to recalculate feelings and ideas related to political belonging, national or otherwise, will also increase.

Under these conditions, affective and formal connections between individuals and their prefigured social and political identities fray. But because many if not most contemporary political imaginaries remain thoroughly imbued with a quasi-naturalized belief in national identities, filiations, and border-logics, and because the nation-state framework has been politically normative for so long this argument can be difficult to picture, so let me route it through a quick comparison. When in the *Gay Science* Nietzsche first refers to the “greatest event in history,” that “God is dead,” he knows full well that despite his best efforts to articulate this “event unlike any other,” still “lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds though done still require time to be seen and heard.” In other words, important events can occur without their importance being immediately apparent. So, even if we— and I am being circumspect with regard to my use of ‘we’ here— sometimes must speak and think within the horizon of a political imaginary constructed around the model of a pluralist, modern nation-state, this speaking and thinking alone would not necessarily be any kind of evidence against my claim that security-sector fusions have already exploded that model. On the other hand, nor would any histrionic references to Nietzschean theodanatology be any kind of evidence, either. So to get the ball rolling, here is how I plan to make my argument. First, I will consider an important although ultimately unproductive approach to the study of security-sector hybridizations that is defined by fidelities to the liberal-democratic political imaginary. On my reading, this first class of theories is unproductive because although it has its places, it forces

heuristic limits on the interpretation of emerging security governance paradigms. To get around these limits, I will strategically bracket this first class of theories altogether, and I will instead move to consider two more recently developed frameworks for thinking about contemporary security-sector reforms.

The first, offered by the international relations scholar Sean McFate, I will refer to using terms supplied by the author as neomedieval theory (NT). This theory posits that recent structural changes within global security governance patterns are bound up with a corresponding decline in the significance of nation-state structures relative to alternative and in many cases competing forms of political, cultural, religious, and economic mobilization. NT reads contemporary force hybridization movements as in a sense both chrysalis and catalyst for the generation of novel political lamellae independently pursuing their own rational self-interests under intensifying conditions of political heteronomy, and it seeks to envision political futures beyond nation-state imaginaries even as it acknowledges that this political form will remain important and influential into the foreseeable future. The second framework I consider, global security assemblage theory (GSAT), was collaboratively developed by the political scientists Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams to interpret contemporary changes within global security governance patterns. However, in contrast with McFate's approach GSAT instead stresses how emerging security institutions and practices perpetually transgress and overwhelm fixed political boundaries, legal categories, ideological framings, and cultural identities. Both theories add depth and complexity to the security studies literature by moving the field of study beyond the conceptual limits imposed by the normative lenses of the nation-state system and the public-private distinction, and in that sense, they are both pivotal contributions to my own dissertation project.

However, as I touch upon in my conclusion both NT and GSAT also produce unsatisfying accounts of political agency in the roughly analogous futures they portend. In other words, neither theory considers substantive differences within political values, identities, and desires. Nor do these theories have much to say about how changing security governance structures are likely to produce different impacts for politicized subjects across geographies. Thus, while I mostly want to suggest a constructivist reading of these two theories in which each theory reveals an important piece of the puzzle, I also want to suggest at a very fine level of detail that they will need an account of politico-ethical agency to complete their frameworks. In light of that suggestion, when I conclude this chapter I will be offering a brief reflection on Eve Tuck's article, *Breaking up with Deleuze: Desire and Valuing the Irreconcilable* in relation to NT and GSAT to give an example of how one might go about supplementing critical security studies with a grounded account of political desire.¹ This final reflection will help me to identify an important lacuna in the security studies literature, and it will also pave the way for the questions I want to ask in my fifth and final chapter about what a more politically heteronomous future might mean for the continuity of emancipatory projects deeper into the 21st century. In these ways, I will complete my argument that contemporary security-sector fusions drive processes of nation-state decline.

Reading Security-Sector Fusions Beyond Liberal Democracy

Getting back to this idea that narratives of democratic perfectibility will only impose unhelpful framings upon the field of critical security studies, there are different kinds of readings

¹ Tuck, Eve. "Breaking up with Deleuze: Desire and valuing the irreconcilable"

of security-sector fusions that perform it. For reasons I identified in the last chapter, what I am calling contemporary force hybridization movements picked up speed in the late 1990's and thereafter dramatically accelerated, especially in the wake of the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is not surprising, then, that around the same time that security-fusions began to flourish, they also began to garner increased attention from journalists, scholars, and military analysts. Thinking broadly about this initial wave of concern, Aaron Chan has observed important differences between how military-based researchers tended to view security-sector fusions versus how academics and journalists generally treated them.² Military analyst, Chan notes, "tended to treat them as a given fact and were primarily concerned with gauging their operational value," while academics and journalists nearly exclusively thought about them through a normative lens that perceived them as affronts to the political and legal norms of democratic states.³ In both framings, however, liberal democracy is something that remains unaffected, or it is something that needs to be brought back into proper balance. Consequently, this class of theories is fundamentally but uncritically stabilized via essentialist readings of the public-private distinction and nation-state imaginaries.

With respect to academic and journalistic conversations surrounding the seemingly sudden return of non-state military actors to warfare, P.W. Singer's 2003 book *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* was among the first books to introduce the military privatization industry to a general audience, and it too engaged in this sort of cautionary tale.⁴ While Singer's book is laudably "tentative" in its conclusions, especially given what were

² Chan, Aaron. "Public War, Private Soldiers"

³ Ibid, Paragraphs 53-58.

⁴ Singer, Peter Warren. *Corporate warriors*.

at the time of its publication still largely nascent developments in security-sector reform, true to Chan's observations about publications during this period of time Singer's book ultimately characterized privatization trends as "troublesome" for democracies, human rights, and political ethics. More to the larger point I am making here, it also relied on the basic terms of the public-private distinction and the nation-state system to structure its investigations and critiques. Or, to take a second example, in 2007 the journalist Jeremy Skahill, co-founder of the self-described 'adversarial' news outlet *The Intercept*, published the widely read *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Largest Mercenary Army*.⁵ In this book, Skahill delivered a broad-side critique of security-sector fusions and painted them as completely anathema to the public good at home and to human rights abroad, but he did not offer any other ways to think about these fusions beyond the usual terms of analysis. More recently, the historian Timothy Snyder's best-selling anti-authoritarian handbook, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the 20th Century*, equated security privatization trends with Nazi politics and saw in them the possibility of an impending fascist political order; but even then, Snyder did not consider political possibilities other than the revivification of liberal-democratic institutions, which would seem to be what each of his "lessons" are about.^{6,7} Again, these discourses are not without their importance, but at the same time they also seem to operate within the channels of Derridean Messianism and thus also carry with them the assumption that liberal-democracy and the nation-state system are the antidote to

⁵ Scahill, Jeremy. *Blackwater*.

⁶ Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny*.

⁷ Snyder's analysis is highly specific and only draws on a very small number of historical examples to support his rather general point that non-state security actors betoken impending tyrannies. However, it's far from clear to me that this is necessarily the case.

ever-expanding non-state policing and military forces and hybridizations between public and private force actors.

In reaction to critical security studies, almost predictably numerous counter-polemics were issued by politicians, think tanks, and the business community. I touched on this in the last chapter, so I will not repeat myself here, but in general the claims were and remain that military and security privatization trends are innovative, that they save tax-payers money, they are nimble and highly adaptable, they provide for the niche specializations and technical expertise required in modern warfare, and that there is a greater political good served when governments do not overly encroach on the private sector. Whether any of that is true or false, as was reinforced by my account of the etiology of contemporary force hybridization movements in the last chapter it is in either case absolutely inconceivable that contemporary political states, regardless of their present or future identities, might go to war without extensive hybridizations in their total force structures, period. But to advance my discussion here, whether we frame contemporary force privatization movements through a critical, affirmative, or simply a pragmatic perspective, in all of these cases the historicity and cultural specificity of the western-nation state model and the related historical genesis of the public-private distinction fall out of the picture. The political scientist Michael C. Williams captures this idea perfectly when he writes, “in [all of] these framings, despite their differences, the nature of the state remains unaltered. It may be weaker or stronger, it might gain or lose power, but as a basic unit or category of analysis it is unchanged and ontologically intact” (131).⁸ In effect, in both critical and supportive approaches to the myriad phenomena attaching to contemporary force hybridization movements, the basic cultural

⁸ Williams, Michael C. *Global Security Assemblages*.

coordinates which sustain debates over whether they ruin or protect liberal-democratic states often get taken for granted. There is a need, therefore, to develop critical approaches to the study of security-sector fusions that can move the conversation beyond the impasse this issue Williams raises.

To help resolve Williams' dilemma, or in other words, to bypass the reading limits liberal-democratic norms and fidelities impose on the study of security-sector fusions, in what follows I strategically bypass these framings altogether. I am a broken record: this is not to say that such debates are meaningless or unimportant, but it is to say that if the goal of this dissertation is to theorize the implications and significance of widespread changes within the social structure of security governance then this first class of debates simply will not do much for my project. To use the familiar Hegelian expression, they can only 'paint gray upon gray.' Therefore, without further ado, let me now offer close readings of the two frameworks I have already introduced, NT and GSAT.

Security-Sector Fusions as Extranational Politics

Although NT is not restricted to the study of security cultures alone, in McFate's thinking military privatization trends are the foremost indicators of a reconfigured geopolitics that is fundamentally different from traditional ideas and practices flowing from nation-state models of sovereignty.⁹ Mcfate's book, *The Modern Mercenary: the Return of Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order* thus frames recent, widespread trends toward military privatization as inextricably bound up with a globally dispersed return to pre-modern conditions of political heteronomy in which nation-state structures cease to be politically normative. The book's central

⁹ For example, Varoufakis, Yanis. *Technofeudalism: What killed capitalism*.

argument is that if we are to better comprehend world affairs, we must “acknowledge the fundamental reorganization and redistribution of power in the global system from state to non-state actors [and] embrace the fragmentation of state sovereignty... toward an unstructured system of overlapping authorities and allegiances” (74-75).¹⁰ Within this reconfigured political landscape, normative critiques of security ‘privatization’ trends, in so far as they are based on the familiar lexicon of liberal law, represent more a nostalgic clinging to a dilapidating political order than a clear reading of the broader context and implications of emerging security governance trends.

It is important to note that for McFate the term ‘neomedieval’ does not equate with “what most people think of as the ‘dark ages,’” as never-ending chaos, violence, political uncertainty, stagnation, ignorance, or as the antipode of modern doctrines of progress. “The medieval world did not collapse into anarchy for want of a strong state-centric system but was in fact relatively stable, lasting for about 1,000 years” (72).¹¹ So, far from a clean repetition of the medieval world in either its real or its imaginary aspects McFate’s idea of ‘neomedievalism’ intends to connote an emerging political condition that conjoins unique aspects of pre-modern and post-modern political life into a novel historical development with incipient features that are just now beginning to take shape. On this account, nation-states will not disappear; rather, they begin to cease to be the dominant political structures around which social actors across contexts will continue to organize their primary ideological filiations, practical activities, and senses of socio-political belonging. This process yields a void into which steps “alternative and older conceptions of political order and belonging around ethnic, cultural, tribal, and religious lines of

¹⁰ Mcfate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*.

¹¹ Ibid

identification” which “eclipse identity based on nationality” (69-70).¹² McFate does not himself make the connection, but this is very close to the Lacanian point that “what you aspire to as revolutionaries is a new master. You will get one!”; or in other words, the displacement of political master-signifiers does not result in the obviation of the psychological spaces and attachments they once generated and occupied, it rather invites narrative substitution. In other words, the *point de capiton*, the quilting point, of national identification cannot *not* be replaced with a supplemental discourse.¹³

Consequently, nation-states must increasingly compete with a multitude of non-state actors and ideas, many of which have turned to military and policing contracting services to support their real and perceived geopolitical and economic agendas, the accomplishment of which will all in some measure depend on their security governance capacities. The world thereby becomes increasingly “multipolar” so that “a single authority can neither impose greater stability nor cause the system to collapse” (73).¹⁴ In this environment, nation-states must learn to navigate a rapidly mutating quasi-system of transnational alliances, competition, and conflict not just with other nation-states, but now with non-state actors alike. “A hundred years ago,” McFate comments, “great power politics meant interactions between states and states alone, but today states share the world stage with a multitude of non-state actors... [who] wield international clout on par with states, making a state-centric system impossible” (73-74).¹⁵ These emerging dynamics thus produce “a new global system that will persist in a state of durable disorder that

¹² *ibid*

¹³ For a review of the relationship between radical politics and the Lacanian discourse of the master-signifier see Newman, Saul. (2004). *Interrogating the Master: Lacan and Radical Politics*.

¹⁴ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*.

¹⁵ *Ibid*

contains rather than solves problems” (XIV).¹⁶ Thus, while military privatization trends initially functioned as the extensions of, primarily, liberal democratic nation-state interests such as migration management, incarceration, military enhancement, the control of trade routes, the securitization of public infrastructures and spaces, and intelligence gathering operations, these reckless but perhaps also at times necessary mobilizations quickly took on an agentic life of their own. As a result, they began to outpace the ability of political states and international bodies to control or meaningfully regulate them.

Harkening back to my engagement with Wendy Brown’s political philosophy, neoliberal regimes of governance may have catalyzed the reemergence of private military companies and non-state surveillance and policing institutions, but they are no longer able to contain them so that, as the range and depth of non-state force actors grow they proportionately corrode classical notions of nation-state sovereignty and, *a fortiori*, the centrality of the public-private distinction. To this point, I might also add the historian Micol Siegel’s point that common rhetorical distinctions between the military and police, especially those which appear in the discourse of ‘militarized police,’ refer to a there that was never really there.¹⁷ As it applies here, Siegel’s point also means that what McFate argues in reference to the private military sector can also apply to the private policing sector so that McFate’s claims about the relationship between privatized military services are therefore doubly significant: they apply not just to patterns of military privatization, but to patterns of policing privatization as well. These claims are indeed radical, so before moving on to my consideration of the contributions of GSAT to the study of security-sector fusions let me first reproduce a sampling of the empirical and theoretical details McFate

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Siegel, Micol. *Always Already Military*.

mobilizes to support his arguments, starting with his description of the historically shifting identity of the United Nations.

Throughout much of the 20th century, the idea of state sovereignty went virtually uncontested. It formed the legal, political, and ideological basis for the international system and it was routinely codified and reaffirmed in international documents and treaties such as the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, and later most comprehensively in the 1945 UN Charter.¹⁸ These documents reflect the centrality of the nation-state system to the global political imaginary throughout much of the 20th century, and they routinely express the belief that nation-state structures are the ultimate basis of sovereignty. As McFate notes, the latter document in particular condemned, at least initially, UN-member state interference within the domestic politics of other UN member states, and during the first half-century of its existence the UN General Assembly (UNGA) seldom departed from this guiding principle. Between 1945 and 1989, for instance, the UNGA voted for only 17 such interventions; however, between 1990 and 2006 it averaged more than 20 per year (69-70).¹⁹ What happened? According to McFate, the UNGA matured into a “transnational actor in its own right... in direct contravention of its own charter” (70).²⁰ It now exists as a quasi-autonomous force on the international stage as it integrates elements of nation-state armies and private sector military service providers to advance a complex suite of economic, humanitarian, and other geopolitical agendas on behalf of an unclear and contested constituency. This example showcases just one example of how nation-

¹⁸ UN Charter; Article 2. 1945

¹⁹ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

states are no longer the only influential political structure on the world's stage, but beyond this example, McFate shares many others.

Following the work of the British political theorist Hedley Bull, McFate proceeds to examine multiple domains across which the destabilization of modern legal and political forms is taking place. Uncoincidentally, each of these domains are also the main areas in which non-state force actors are multiplying and becoming increasingly useful. Reduced to minimal description, these five domains are (1) the globalization of markets and the technological unification of the world; (2) the legal, political, and economic integration of regional state and non-state actors; (3) the rise of transnational political and economic organizations which independently interface with nation-states but do not depend upon them; (4) the widespread collapse or disintegration of political states; and (5), "the clash of sovereignties, not just between states but also among nonstate authorities that are the *de facto* peers of states rather than sub-state actors as traditional political science views them (85)."²¹ It will not do much for my own argument in this chapter to go too far into the details here, but a quick overview will still be helpful.

In the last chapter, I discussed how the imbrication of markets, states, technologies, ideologies, and other forces combined in the 21st century to produce extensive hybridizations between state and non-state security actors, so I will not speak to that again. But with regard to McFate's other defined areas, I will add that he has catalogues the emergence of more than 350 regionally integrated politico-legal bodies since the end of the second World War, and then juxtaposes this number with the fact that there were only 12 such bodies in existence at the start of the 20th century. In relation to nation-state models of sovereignty, regional political

²¹ Ibid.

assemblages would not matter much “if they existed solely to coordinate the interests of member states, but that is not what has happened: the authority of transnational organizations is pressing upon the authority of states” and “states can no longer protect themselves by claiming domestic jurisdiction” (77,79).²² With respect to the rise of other types of supra-national organization, in 1900 there were a ~1,000 transnational NGO’s operating across the world’s political borders, but in 2014 this number was well over 40,000 (79).²³ In today’s geopolitical landscape, McFate contends, the function of many NGO’s is similar to that of the medieval church in that they “do good works,” “support and contravene” political agendas, assert “humanitarian spaces,” claim “universal moral jurisdiction,” and conduct “name and shame” campaigns to enhance their coffers and influence.²⁴ I do not read this observation to imply that McFate is debating the moral value of any specific NGO’s mission; rather, his point simply seems to be that nation-state sovereignties are now routinely and increasingly challenged by a variety of transnational organizations.

Beyond NGO’s but similar to them, multinational corporations represent another salient case of how the power dynamics between nation-states and transnational organizations are changing. In 1960 there were around 3,500 such businesses in the world and their combined revenues added up to around \$68 billion US dollars, but by 2000 there were over 65,000 such corporations and their combined revenues surpassed \$7 trillion (81).²⁵ Today, transnational economic organizations are far less attached to nation-state imaginaries than at any time since the

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ One might think here of legal, political, and ethical debates over immigrant support networks in Europe and the United States such as ‘No More Deaths,’ whose humanitarian activities increasingly run afoul of officially declared nation-state policies.

²⁵ Mcfate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*.

formation of modern politics states, and therefore, even as political states seek to reaffirm and reimagine themselves as sovereigns, *pace* Brown, 21st century capital functions to obviate border logics and legal regimes. Let us not be surprised, then, to learn that as we creep deeper into the 21st century, NGO's and transnational business organizations now constitute the greatest sources of funding for globalized private security and military corporations.

In addition to NGO's and corporations, McFate also adds "illicit groups" to the list of transnational organizations which are now influencing the geopolitical landscape alongside nation-states. This category includes a variety of powerful social actors including transnational drug cartels, militant organizations such as Al Qaeda, MS13, and Boko Haram but could also include, I want to add, the numerous antifederalist groups dotting the inland Pacific Northwest of the United States and the widely emerging "tactical civic" groups which are now claiming for themselves judicial powers across the interior mountain west, for example, in the state of Montana.²⁶ To whatever extent these various groups hold disparate ideologies, they are nonetheless united in and through the fact that "their vision of the future does not entail UN membership but rather stateless society based on their particular interpretations of [the world]" (82).²⁷ While in most respects very far from McFate's category of illicit groups, here we might also be able to consider the academic multiplication of kinship discourses such as they appear in the writings of Kim Tallbear and elsewhere, which likewise offer value-based juxtapositions against pluralist liberal "dreamings."²⁸ Do such discourses, different as they all are, not share a similar mistrust for cosmopolitan nation-state projects? Do they not similarly presuppose a

²⁶ As reported in *The Missoulian*, *The Independent Record*, *The Montana News Bureau*, *Ravalli Republic*, and other state and local newspapers in Montana, date range from September to December 2024.

²⁷ Mcfate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*.

²⁸ TallBear, Kim. 'Caretaking relations, not American dreaming.'

certain failure on the part of nation-states to fulfill the differential desires of heterogeneous social groups? Yes, they do and in this sense: rather than suggesting a primary filiation to pluralist national identities, or to some other national-archetelic narrative, they instead compose fidelities to alternative structures of individual and social identity and belonging. Simply put, they do not desire what nation-states have wanted them to desire.

The consequences of this lack or ambivalence of desire are many and have many causes, and I do not mean to criticize them by suggesting how they share similar political desires. Nonetheless, it is worth adding to the conversation that by at least by 2014 numbers “more than 1 billion people now live under weak or failed states,” and this number is far from hyperbole (84-85).²⁹ According to the *Fragile States Index*, which collates various quantitative indices of state stability to generate unique state failure risk scores for each UN-member state, more than 120 of the world’s 195 current nation-states currently fall below their defined threshold for state stability.³⁰ In other words, the UN considers more than 60% of the world’s nation-states as falling on their scale somewhere between a ‘warning’ and a ‘very high alert’ for immanent state failure. While there is always a gap between, on the one hand, positive descriptions of current events and, on the other, theorizing their future trajectories there is nevertheless a clear 21st century trend toward greater political heteronomy. Against this backdrop, the future of the nation-state model is increasingly opaque and uncertain, but the future of non-state military and security service providers is, in two words, very promising. They flourish in contexts of political instability.

²⁹ McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*.

³⁰ The Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index*.

Ever since the founding of the UN in 1945, this institution has promoted a vision of universal human rights and routinely asserted it as the justificatory basis for global interventions and policy decisions that, at least from the perspective of other global constituencies, have simply smacked of western hypocrisy and imperialism, or at the very least appeared to them as the secular extension of Judeo-Christian values. In direct response to the UN's claims to universal moral jurisdiction, over the last 75 years numerous other value-based alliances and political documents have emerged to contest 'western' values and to proclaim their own versions of moral jurisdiction. Documents such as the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990) and the League of Arab States' Charter on Human Rights (2004), while they at moments parallel values expressed by the UN, they have also focused on the moral distinctiveness of the *ummah* and rejected certain aspects of the UN charter that at least some within the Islamic world have found to be anathema to their values and religious identities. To take another example, the Bangkok Declaration signed in 1993 by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations shows a similar tension *vis a vis* the UN charter. On the one hand, the Bangkok Declaration expresses many of the same commitments to human rights as the UN charter, but on the other hand it juxtaposes 'Asian values' with western beliefs and places, for obvious reasons, a much greater emphasis on the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference than the UN has in the last several decades. Finally, there is also a continuously developing series of transnational Indigenous collaborations which have similarly declared a unique constellation of values and political rights for Indigenous persons and communities that like these other documents remains clearly distinct from the moral visions and aspirations of the UN.³¹

³¹ As two examples, the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, the Indigenous Peoples Economic and Trade Cooperation Arrangement.

Commenting on how these political documents relate to the international system, McFate highlights how “each of these challenges to the universalism of human rights implicitly proposes a competing world vision of justice and legitimacy that sets the groundwork for a neomedieval environment of multiple allegiances and authorities” (87).³² In other words, even as nation-states continue to appear on maps as central figures of political organization, transnational political organizations increasingly assert a multiplicity of values and beliefs which they claim are inviolable expressions of fundamental rights and values. One way to see this tension ‘in action,’ so to speak, is to take note of recent debates in Europe over the wearing of hijabs in public. Another example comes from the Colville Confederated Tribes author Dano Gilio-Whitaker, who has analyzed cultural conflicts within the many water protector encampments currently mushrooming across North America in which yet another rejection of liberalism and nation-state projects is now being articulated.³³ In all such cases, the core questions are what is the appropriate set of background, default rights and duties that should be considered when resolving cultural conflicts within pluralistic spaces, and then also, what authorities or procedures are deemed relevant for their adjudication. Now expanding these examples to the level of transnational politics, we can quickly see how the myriad politico-ethical assertions of heterogenous constituencies challenge transnational actors and institutions to navigate a patchwork of cultural, political, and religious sensibilities beyond the formal authorities and powers provided throughout much of the 20th century, when nation-states more explicitly set the

³² McFate, Sean. *The Modern Mercenary*.

³³ Gilio-Whitaker, Dano. *As Long as the Grass Grows*. Gilio-Whitaker cites cultural conflicts within Indigenous-led water protector encampments over whether, for example, menstruating women should be allowed to participate certain camp activities, and whether non-Indigenous women should be required to dress in ways that are not consistent with certain Indigenous dress codes.

political and legal parameters and tones governing intra- and intercultural conflicts. Political heteronomy, legal pluralism, and contrary moral-jurisdictional assertions were core features of the medieval world, and they have returned in the present; hence, for McFate, we are entering if not already within a “neomedieval state of affairs.”

Through such depictions of contemporary moral agonies, McFate thereby completes his argument that the era of the nation-state, though far from over, has entered into a period of decipherable historical decline. For my own purposes, the most important part of all of this is that the trends specified by McFate all propel the expansion of contemporary security-sector fusions, which in turn also helps me to explain why their contemporary scope and scale are so deeply connected to the decline in the significance of nation-state structures relative to alternative forms of political, economic, cultural, religious, and ideological mobilization. On this line of reasoning, analyses and criticisms of contemporary political power should no longer assume that nation-states will continue to be the central organizing principle around which future political and jurisprudential sovereignties will coalesce. By the same token, because non-state force actors are fundamentally untethered to any identities or interests save capital accumulation, all of the aforementioned changes within geopolitical architectures commensurately enhance the attractiveness, availability, and practicality of non-state security and military service providers in the eyes all social actors regardless of their ideological, gendered, cultural, ethnic, racial, and class filiations and alliances.³⁴

³⁴ One might speculate that this is why Blackwater, the infamous military contracting group, recently changed its name to Xe, the chemical symbol for the inert gas xenon.

Global Security Assemblages as the Realignment
of Political Powers in the 21st Century

As I indicated, McFate’s description of the advent of a so-called “neomedieval” state of affairs is but one of the two conceptual resources informing my theorizing in this dissertation. The other resource influencing my thinking originates in the writings of Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams. Their jointly authored text, *Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics*, establishes GSAT as a mobile template through which to observe emerging security trends across a variety of contexts in terms of their power to “rearticulate” modern legal and political logics.³⁵ On the one hand, 21st security governance trends contravene these logics; but on the other hand, Abrahamsen and Williams contribute the important idea that even as security-sector fusions frustrate these logics, at the same time they require them for reshaping the social identities of non-state force actors. As discussed in Chapter 2, a central component in the ideological construction of the modern liberal state was to get members of this new category of the citizen to begin viewing non-state security actors with pronounced antipathy. But today, political autophagy is pushing political actors to renew extensive partnerships with non-state security actors as a condition for the advancement of their own power projects, which in turn thus necessitates the reversal of their normative relations with non-state force actors. Another contribution of GSAT: whereas NT focuses almost exclusively on military privatization trends, GSAT instead seeks to re-focus security studies “away from the battlefields and the spectacular exploits of the private military towards the phenomenal growth and globalization of commercial private security... to show the full significance and impact of contemporary

³⁵ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*.

processes of privatization cannot be grasped through a focus on the military sector alone” (1-2).³⁶

With these general comments in mind, I will now present my theoretical review of GSAT before returning in my conclusion to this larger question of how to recognize heterogenous political desires and identities within the frameworks I am now endorsing.

GSAT identifies 21st century security-sector fusions as inherently boundary crossing phenomena which simply cannot be understood or interdicted by means of conventional categories, legal regimes, and political imaginaries. By route of intellectual genealogy, GSAT both nominally and epistemically seems to derive from assemblage theory (AT), but since Abrahamsen and Williams do not mention any connections between their own work and any exact philosophical frameworks or figures, I must be cautious about overly specifying its intellectual pedigree. At a minimum, however, we might at least imagine that by one intellectual route or another, assemblage theory made its way into their approach. Assuming as much, AT gives Abrahamsen and Williams a reading method for tracing connections between the empirical realities of 21st century security-sector fusions and the changing nature of liberal political power. AT also (presumably) informs their core operative concept, the idea of a global security assemblage (GSA). Abrahamsen and Williams define GSA's as:

new security structures that are simultaneously public and private, global and local. Within [them]... the very distinctions between the public and the private, the global and the local, are rearticulated and reworked, giving rise to new practices and forms of power that cannot be neatly contained within the geographic boundaries of the nation-state system (3)³⁷

In this definition, as in NT we find a clear claim about the emergence of superstructural political powers and formations which no longer supervene upon nation-state structures, yet which do not

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

necessarily contradict them outright, either. On this view state power is in an active process of re-inventing itself, and nation-states thus appear as a kind of historical scaffolding up which power's tendrils climb rather than as any kind of teleological end point within the evolution of political forms. In relation to security-sector fusions, this crucial idea also helps me to frame them as evincing a double function of simultaneously re-affirming and contesting modern legal and political logics.

Although GSAT focuses on the commercial private security industry, this focus does not entail a catalogue of private policing actions or deployments; rather, it entails a focus on the newly emerging roles this industry performs within societies and how their emerging social roles recalibrate power dynamics within and across political states. To track these "new forms of power," Abrahamsen and Williams primarily rely on the writings of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to develop their account. Beginning with a modification to the Weberian idea that nation-state power primarily rests on the acquisition of the rights and means of legitimate violence, the authors of *Security Beyond the State* recast the idea of 'pinnacular' sovereignty as more accurately describable as the result of a "culmination of processes of concentration of different species of capital" (9). In this modification, diverse forms of social power — what Bourdieu calls "capitals" — traverse the history of political forms such that any historically given political institution or actor can be understood as having acquired its social status by combining different species of capital rather than as simply standing uncomplicatedly upon coercive power alone. In the Bourdieuan vocabulary that Abrahamsen and Williams adopt, there are three kinds of social capital, economic, cultural, and symbolic, and together they determine the internal structure of a "field of practice." As "a structured space of relative positions," a

practice field is then said to contain “interrelations which are determined by the relative distribution of different kinds of capital” within it (103).³⁸ The power of any one form of capital within a given field of practice, in other words, is both internally and externally relative to the boundary-field-of-practice in which it expresses itself as such.

So, how does this apply to the security field? For the authors of *Security Beyond the State*, “there is no direct relationship between capital and effective action... power is practical, not arithmetic” (105).³⁹ Modern nation-state formations, they suggest, did not solely depend upon the quantitative aggregation of one or more species of capital but upon the functional assembly of these aforementioned species of capital within the wider field of extant political practices. As this all relates to emerging, 21st century security governance practices non-state security actors can only flourish within liberal societies by drawing from a multiplicity of capitals. They must, for instance, maintain a facsimile of symbolic resemblance to private enterprise in order to conjure liberal affects arising from social ideals of individual liberty and free conduct, yet they also must draw from this symbolic well to maintain appearances that they are securing either public or humanitarian goods. If they do not successfully ride this line— hybridize private and public identities, that is— they risk the ideological reclassification of being more akin to criminal syndicates than legitimate security agents.⁴⁰ Two quick examples will help to clarify this tension. The South African paramilitary company Executive Outcomes did not lose wealth, status, and power in post-Apartheid South Africa for any want of economic or cultural capitals alone. To the contrary, before the African National Congress (ANC) forced their legal

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ This tension, and the risk of becoming ‘criminal syndicates,’ is explored in some detail in *Security Beyond the State*. Pgs. 111-121 in particular.

dissolution in 1998 they were one of the most well-funded, organized, and otherwise powerful military actors across sub-Saharan Africa. Yet their inability to mobilize the symbolic capitals accruing to the name of the public interest eventually led to their being outlawed by the ANC precisely *because* the ANC perceived the company to possess an over accumulation of economic and cultural capitals.⁴¹ As a second example, recall from Chapter 2 the fate of the British East India Company. It did not lose control over India because of military or economic weaknesses, but because both the British public and politicians converged on the view the company had become anathema to the national interest. As these two examples illustrate, while each species of capital is to some degree a necessary condition for the production of political power, no single form of capital, regardless of its amount, is alone a sufficient condition for maintaining it.

Back in connection with the contemporary commercial security industry, Abrahamsen and Williams then use Bourdeau's ideas to suggest that any understanding of the contemporary security field will "require the location of shifting forms of capital ... and [tracing] their connections to politics and sovereignty" (106).⁴² The newfound social powers held by the commercial security industry therefore arise from its ability to combine economic and cultural capitals with pre-existing symbols of state power and authority such as the police and the military as well as the affective powers of security conscience individuals and institutions.⁴³ On this model, the commercial security industry has not gained power and influence simply because it has become wealthier or more technically competent, but because the industry is now transferring the symbolic capitals formerly possessed by public institutions *as* public institutions

⁴¹ See Chapter 1, footnote #2 of this dissertation.

⁴² Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*

⁴³ See Chapter 3, Section 4 of this dissertation; discussion of 'responsibilization.'

over to itself. Through ongoing processes of security hybridization, commercial security actors come to occupy a liminal position between the public and private domains which uniquely but helpfully situates them as the principle conduit through which public policing powers start to flow back to non-state actors. It is important to add, however, that while the commercial security industry may stand out as this newly privileged conduit, the social power they increasingly accrue is not theirs alone. As the security representatives of countless non-state actors ranging from transnational NGOs to multinational resource extraction and transportation firms, commercial security companies at bottom express the political, economic, cultural, and social-symbolic interests of their patrons, their ‘principals.’

In that regard, while 21st century commercial security actors enforce topological controls in order to acquire various forms of social capital for themselves, in the process they transfer capitals to their patrons as well. On such links, Abrahamsen and Williams comment

the power of private security mainly lies its connections to that of its clients via private property rights... The most basic and oldest linkage between the economic and cultural capital in security privatization derives from the protection of liberal property rights, and from the principle-agent relationship between private security and the private property of clients...*They are the agents of those who own or control property* (107-108, italics mine).

To their observation, I might also add the detail that, as established in Chapter 2, the origins of the modern public-private distinction equally transect a developing body of law around the legal rights and limits to self-defense and the related rights of non-state actors to appoint their own security representatives. For instance, I can ‘stand my ground’ or I can pay someone else to do it for me. Thus, in addition to being among the earliest architects of the legal differences between the public and private domains, the 17th century English jurist William Blackstone was also—

and perhaps unsurprisingly— one of the original theorists of self-defense law.⁴⁴ Interestingly, while these rights were first imagined by figures such as Blackstone and Locke as progressive developments which would secure private persons and things against the overreach of the *ancien regime*, when we consider these legal foundations against the contemporary backdrop of (re-)emerging conditions of political heteronomy such as McFate and Abrahamsen and Williams picture them these older juridical associations between private property and the right to self-defense may now be said to facilitate territorial assertions and resource appropriations by non-state actors under this same legal framework of a right to self-defense.^{45,46} Thus ‘pre-emptive invasion’ as a military discourse; thus the expansion of ‘private defined orders’; and thus, as I am contending, the redistribution of sovereignty among heterogenous political and economic powers in the present.

This rethinking of ‘defensive’ warfare affects a more fundamental reimagining of the lines separating public from private spaces, and not merely as the waxing and waning of one dimension relative to the other, but instead as an increasingly incoherent set of legal-topological controls which can overlap and cooccur but therefore also produce conflicting demands upon political subjects. Spaces previously imagined as falling within the public domain thereby transmute not only into regionalities of private stewardship, diachronically speaking they also point toward the dissolution of the borders which mark the extension of property logics into the register of the foreign and the domestic. Again, *not* as entanglement, but as disintegration.

⁴⁴ Blackstone, William. *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. On the rights of self-defense. Book 1, Chapter 1, Section 2, Paragraphs 1-5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, paragraphs 1-15, but especially 13-15.

⁴⁶ Locke, John. *Two Treatises on Government*, Treatise 1 Sections 1-14.

To capture how the commercial security industry functions within these wider dynamics, Abrahamsen and Williams correspondingly formulate the notion of a “transboundary region” as a name for a distinct set of still invisible cartographic overlays which can impose their own forms of sovereignty upon extant political subjects regardless of their preexisting relations, positive or negative, with political states. Echoing McFate’s description of neomedievalism transboundary regionalities are topographic “spaces that defy the neatly defined geographical boundaries of nation-states [and they] cannot be classified as either local, national, or international” (4)⁴⁷ They are “stretched across territorial boundaries and involve multiple actors, values, and discourses” and they “reveal...the emergence of new geographies of security and power” (4).⁴⁸

For example, in their field research Abrahamsen and Williams identify nascent transboundary regionalities emerging within and across the nation-state borders of the Republic of Niger, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and South Africa, and they can mark these shifting political contours by analyzing how local, state, and transnational security actors merge—the eponymous assemblages—to advance resource extraction projects and stabilize market environments on behalf of contesting local and transnational forces. Across such contexts, one and the same security agent can function as a member of either a local or national police unit, or as non-state commercial security actors. Legal identities can fluctuate depending on where an agent is stationed and what duties that agent performs. And sometimes, the same legal identity functions across deployments. Within these emerging political lamellae, the public-private distinction and other logics of the nation-state evaporate even as they perform.

⁴⁷ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*

⁴⁸ Ibid

While Abrahamsen and Williams develop their concept of a transboundary regionality via references to different African contexts, it is also important to state that similar dynamics are playing out in other locations as well. Yet owing to the liberal-nation state imaginary, this idea of a transboundary regionality can be more difficult to appreciate elsewhere, but especially when they unfold within so-called ‘strong states.’ For example, North American countries such as the US and Canada are generally regarded as possessing fixed and stable political boundaries, but it remains true that the topographic imaginaries associated with these state projects are incongruous with the political memories and claims of many First Nations constituencies, so at least in that regard contemporary North American political states represent their own version of a transboundary regionality. This idea comes to light more clearly when we take stock of the fact that commercial security actors routinely enact territorial assertions— ‘land grabs’— on behalf of their principles in the present North American context even if contemporary political maps remain unaltered on paper. For instance, within sites of social conflict over resource extraction and transportation projects such as the Dakota Access Pipeline, the pending construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, and the Mariner 3 line, these same sorts of security-sector fusions occur and therefore may be said to likewise produce novel transboundary regionalities in so far as, as discussed in Chapter 3, it is increasingly common for public police to receive funding from and extensively coordinate with transnational resource extraction companies and non-state policing actors to assert these new spatialities of coercion. It is therefore not just in the so-called ‘fragile’ states of the world in which security-sector fusions contribute to processes of nation-state

deformation, it is happening in the contemporary US and Canada and other strong states as well.⁴⁹

To further clarify the notion of a transboundary regionality, Abrahamsen and Williams also speak in terms supplied within globalization discourses. Often framed as simply a matter of quantitative increases to cross-border flows of goods, services, and economic capitals across nation-state borders, Abrahamsen and Williams suggest that globalization is something else entirely. Capital “[flows] have always been around,” they point out, and thus any distinctions between contemporary and historical versions of global trade networks require an analysis that moves beyond the quantitative dimension alone (90).⁵⁰ Borrowing from the writings of the sociologist Saskia Sassen, Abrahamsen and Williams take serious issue with the widespread belief that globalization is a historical process corroding political states from the outside as if it were a naïve version of Smith’s invisible hand. This assumption, they suggest, only renders opaque the fact that nation-states often perform their processes of disassembly. “It is precisely the national state that made today’s global era possible... Globalization came into existence at the direct instigation of national governments and continues to operate through transformed national institutions that enable and facilitate” globalization (91).⁵¹ Globalization, in other words, is a politically *active* force.

Nation-states, at least nation-states committed to autophagy, are therefore not passive respondents to the variegated pressures of a complex international market, they actively construct these pressures and this market through warfare abroad and policy adjustments at

⁴⁹ Sullivan, J. ‘Legal Issues in Private Security: The Moonlighting Police Officer’

⁵⁰ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*

⁵¹ Ibid

home. By thinking about globalization in this way, it thus becomes possible to reimagine nation-state dissolutions as a diverse set of strategic initiatives and purposive governmental activity. From this viewpoint, privatization movements in general therefore index more than simply domestic legal, economic, or political formations, they instead represent the seeding and growth of a new set of superstructural political and economic formations that will ultimately leave liberal political and legal logics in the lurch. These novel formations may leverage the political and legal logics of the state to their advantage, but they redistribute states' formerly aggregated forms of social capital from the contested domain of 'things public' into the identities and bank accounts of these superstructural formations. In this way, transnational political and economic formations supersede nation-states' capacities for restraint, and the meaning of nation-state sovereignty therefore changes forever.

In summary, then, when we view either security-sector fusions or the idea of sovereignty through the lens of GSAT, this theory "allows us to capture the contemporary re-articulation of territory and authority and the presence of actors and forms of capital not tied to a specific national setting or territory... [and] the new modalities of power through which the very categories of the public and the private and the global and the local are reconstituted and reconfigured" (120-121).⁵² The Bordieuan element within GSAT allows for the identification of how diverse forms of social capital may combine within and across fields of practice to yield new forms of power, and globalization discourses within this framework reveal "how the dynamics of the security field play out not only within the parameters of public and private but to an increasing extent global/national and global/local levels" (116). In combination, these two

⁵² Ibid

conceptual pillars help Abrahamsen and Williams relocate the field of security studies outside of ongoing debates over the implications of security privatization movements for regimes of liberal-democratic governance, and they allow us to witness the evolution of security governance paradigms across manifold contexts. Therefore, the most important lesson to be derived from the study of contemporary force privatization movements through the lens of GSAT is that modernity's political and legal substrata are more than merely entangled, they are losing their formal and affective powers to organize both the inner territories of the political imaginary and the outer territories of physical space. We have not proper names nor laws for this future. Today, to adopt the Heideggerian expression, we remain *unterwegs zur sprache*.

Eve Tuck and the Case of the Missing Agent:
A Conclusion, of Sorts

In this chapter, I characterized security-sector fusions as driving processes of nation-state deformation. My argument was that contemporary security-sector fusions both index and facilitate new bordered figures which transcend the ideological and geographic inscriptions of the nation-state system as well as the international system that nations subtend. In developing this argument, I leaned heavily on NT and GSAT to illuminate a bevy of theoretical and empirical details which together support my vision of a crumbling political imaginary and its replacement by counter figurations. And yet, even as I am confident this vision captures at least something true about the social and political impacts of security-sector fusions, I remain left with the belief that something crucial is missing from my account. In a word, this missing something is the agent, or that political subject who walks into the future in lockstep with the macropolitical social and political transitions I am describing. With this thought in mind, what I'd now like to

add to the above discussion is the idea that the social and political impacts of changing security governance paradigms will differentially impact ‘actually existing’ political subjects. My intention in this concluding section is therefore to illuminate the disappearance of the (politically) desiring-subject from the theories I have drawn from throughout this chapter, not because this illumination will contradict those theories, but because it will call on us to remember the subject position within them.

To help me with what I have in mind here, as I mentioned I will be offering a brief reading of Eve Tuck’s article *Breaking up with Deleuze: Desire and Valuing the Irreconcilable*.⁵³ On the surface, Tuck’s article may appear to have nothing to do with the field of critical security studies, but that is incorrect, for it is a critique of assemblage theory and the line of criticism that Tuck develops can be extended, rhizome-like let’s say, to assemblage theories’ intellectual progenies. Again, Abrahamsen and Williams neither cite nor mention assemblage theory by name, but there are clear similarities between GSAT and Deleuze and Guittari’s theorization of the rhizome; e.g., the emergent and the coeval, the stochastic and the multilinear, centers everywhere and nowhere, fluidity and transgression— all of these concepts appear in assemblage theory and they all clearly inform the thinking behind *Security Beyond the State* as well. Given the important parallels between GSAT and NT that I have already mentioned, Tuck’s critique of assemblage theory can, I think, also be applied to certain aspects of NT without too much fuss. Consequently, when and for what reasons Tuck decides she must end her love affair with the Deleuzian corpus stands to influence how we might think about NT and GSAT moving forward.

⁵³ Tuck, Eve. *Breaking up with Deleuze*

By way of summary, let me quickly revisit the key convergences between NT and GSAT before considering Tuck's critique and what that critique might mean for these two frameworks. Centrally, NT and GSAT both prognosticate a political and legal trajectory in which liberal-democratic nation-state models lose formal and affective traction within the hearts and minds of political subjects. In turn, this loss corresponds with gains for (re-)emerging forms of sociation that presuppose alternative sociative dynamics. In terms of argumentative structure, and despite their differences, both NT and GSAT share the important step of deprivileging liberal-democratic political imaginaries as the best framework for reading latter-day developments within the social structure of security governance. Then, by exposing the gap between the legal and political logics of the public-private distinction and the nation-state system on the one hand, and the empirical realities of globalized security-sector developments on the other, the new political formations they describe first come to light. McFate's reading of security-sector reforms thinks in terms of the structural production of novel political lamellae, and Abrahamsen and Williams readings track genetics, but in both cases, we still arrive at an image of future territorializations which are "stretched across boundaries and involving multiple actors, values, and discourses"; we can see "the emergence of new geographies of security and power" (4).⁵⁴ But however faintly or clearly we might be able to imagine these future political configurations, NT and GSAT do not leave room in their theories for specific political identities or agencies, or in a word, desire. Putting this a little differently, within their descriptions of political futures both NT and GSAT leave underexplored the concept of political agency.

⁵⁴ Abrahamsen, Rita and Williams, Michael C. *Security Beyond the State*

At first, this concern may seem ambiguous, overstated, or simply unnecessary, so let me return to Tuck's critique of assemblage theory to paint the picture of how it applies to NT and GSAT. Tuck's critique of assemblage theory begins with a review of her former infatuation with it and its "chewy" buffet of concepts, possible applications, and proximity to her own cultural-epistemic fidelities. She writes, for instance,

My own epistemology – actively cultivated by my Unangan grandmother, and by my own being in the world as a writer and thinker – found a self-same companion in [assemblage theory,] this beyond-structure of the rhizome, in which any point can be connected to anything other, and must be. No roots, no starting place, no sequence, no ending place; only multiple sources, interruptions, interceptions, foldings, mergings, partings, multiple entry ways, exponential sequences, always, always the seeking out and out (638)⁵⁵

The mind that thinks the assemblage, or in other words, the mind that thinks 'beyond structure' and under the lexical auspices of the rhizome initially appeared to Tuck as a "self-same companion" in her intellectual journey as a writer and thinker. There was courtship, infatuation, and genuine connection with it. However, as Tuck moved deeper into her relationship with poststructuralist thought, first through the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, but then into the works of Foucault and Nietzsche she began to feel as if she were losing herself.

But not just losing herself in an ordinary sense, although that's important, too, but in a much deeper way. That is, she began to feel as if that part of her which was not just made by and from her but was also made by her grandmother and all of her ancestors before was disappearing. There was, in other words, an element of her subject position that is the product of a generations-long accrual of desiring-intelligence that is at one and the same time irreducibly Unangan and herself which assemblage theory is fundamentally unable to "re-cognize." Feeling this, her love affair with Deleuze ends. She now refuses to be a missing subject in the rhizomatic universe of

⁵⁵ Tuck, Eve. *Breaking up with Deleuze*

emergences and confluences which Deleuze already knew was a form of “nihilitive coding.”⁵⁶ In rationalizing her break-up, Tuck thus arrives at the following, poignant language:

the haecceity of desire *is* a sufficient explanation. Deleuze, however, insists that desire is unconscious..., yet I hold that Deleuze gives too much up when he says that desire is perfectly meaningless (645)⁵⁷

And that, I think, cuts straight through to the marrow of the matter, doesn't it?

But then what does this all mean in application to my readings of NT and GSAT? As I suggested, these frameworks help to advance the study of the social and political impacts of contemporary security-sector reforms by seeing past the liberal democratic imaginary; however, even as they achieve this important heuristic victory, they also remain silent with regard to the haecceity of intelligent desire within the futures they imagine. Nor do they articulate what a more politically heteronomous future might mean for different politicized identities and desires. To put this differently, NT and GSAT may imagine newer figures of social and political organization, but Tuck's “haecceity of intelligent desire” goes missing in their constructs. As Tuck's critique helps us to see, assemblage theory as well as its intellectual peers and descendants, including GSAT and by extension NT, neglect the uniqueness of identities and political desires within the dialectical futures such theories imagine. As I stated, however, I also still maintain that both NT and GSAT contribute something important to both the study of contemporary security-sector fusions, and to this dissertation. Most of all, they help me to link security-sector fusions to processes of nation-state entropy and to degradations within the substantive meaning of liberal law. Is there any way to countenance the haecceity of desire within these theories, and by

⁵⁶ Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix. *Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia*.

⁵⁷ Tuck, Eve. *Breaking up with Deleuze*

extension within my own writings? Perhaps what we might say is that what NT and GSAT offer is something akin to a mathematical function, or a desiccated form that, assuming its propositional validity, might nevertheless be used to specify in advance the results of any such introjection of haecceity into its equations. If NT and GSAT never quite deliver on any dependent variables, it is only because the 'x' that would be required to meaningfully resolve its implications has yet to be supplied, to be theorized or read into them.

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CHAPTER FIVE

PROJECT CONCLUSION AND A LINGERING QUESTION

The Beginning of the End

When I introduced this dissertation, I articulated the fundamental question informing its development. It was, what are the social and political impacts of contemporary force hybridization movements? From this question, it is clear that my basic aims were theoretical. I did not, in other words, simply wish to add another empirical study to the ever-growing literature base surrounding contemporary changes to the social structure of security governance, I more wanted to take a stab at interpreting their social and political implications, but especially for the liberal-democratic political imaginary. The answers I developed in this project were two, although they are also two sides of the same coin. First, I argued that contemporary security-sector fusions spearhead a dialectical development beyond the modern nation-state system, and second, they transform liberal legal distinctions between the public and the private into a vestigial organ of governance. These conclusions might seem hyperbolic. Well, I certainly painted with a broad brush, and my theorizing was macroscopic in perspective and meta-cosmopolitan in spirit; nevertheless, I do not believe my results are exaggerated. In the end, we can think of this project's conclusions as more akin to lenses or instruments than to anything else. They should change how we think about the empirical realities of contemporary security sector reforms, and in that sense, what I have offered is a critique and not a criticism.

To conclude this critique, here is what I have in store for this, my final chapter. In the next section, I will simply review the course of my arguments. From there, in the more

substantive part of this conclusion I will look beyond my own research for connections between it and other currents of thought as they appear within my homefield of American Studies and beyond. As I have argued, security-sector fusions index the transmogrification of the nation-state system and the warping of legal logics beyond liberalism's structural limits. By the same token, I suggested, they also contribute to the production of alternative social, economic, cultural, and political formations as well, or to use McFate's terms for the same thing, they create a more politically heteronomous future within which modernity's key legal and political logics cease to be either convincing or operative fictions. But if indeed the nation-state system is fading away, and with it, normative legal paradigms, then what would be the consequences of these transformations for the future of emancipatory logics? As I foreground below, the liberal-democratic imaginary is often an object of criticism across political discourses, and in the context of emancipatory programs, it is frequently pictured as an obstacle to their success now and in the future. But as I would also like to suggest in parting, critical-ideological discourses seldom imagine the collapse of their object of antipathy. As I put it in the very first pages of this project, what is a revolution without a state against which to revolt?

Just to be clear, I do not attempt to answer this complex question in the following pages. But since I believe my project's conclusions suggest a political future in which capital forces no longer find liberalism in either its political or legal extensions necessary for its own destinies, my question about the meaning of emancipatory programs within a politically heteronomous future troubles me a great deal. Such a question may also put some distance between me and theorists who will continue to insist that the criticism of state power represents the *summon bonum* of critical-ideological discourse. As I said, I have no immediate answers to my question. But in

completing this dissertation research and writing project, I can at the very least stage a preliminary conversation that may help to orient both myself and any other reader to a future direction for research. In my final paragraphs, therefore, my plan is to articulate what I will call an unexpected unity of opposites between the political desires of emancipatory programs on the one hand, and today's transnational capital forces on the other. In whatever other respects they differ—and of course there are many—nonetheless they both seem to converge on a shared rejection of the formal and supererogatory limits which liberal nationalism imposes on their competing yet bizarrely complementary visions for the future. In a sentence, my study of security-sector fusions suggests that the withering away of the state is in a minimal sense happening very much like Engels had anticipated, but nevertheless, the dynamics I addressed in this project are producing very different futures from what the author of *Anti-Duhring* expected. What, is the “haecceity of intelligent desire” simply another name for the “cunning of reason?”

Project Summary and Results

Before getting to these matters, let me first review this dissertation and the path of my arguments. In the introduction to this project, I foregrounded the study of contemporary security-sector fusions by placing the idea of state security into conversation with Wendy Brown's writings on neoliberalism and liberal democracy. This conversation foregrounded the relevance of my project to ongoing conversations within political philosophy, and it also established the major stakes involved in the study of changing security governance paradigms. Extending Brown's reflections, I then characterized contemporary security-sector fusions as the ‘divine incarnation of capital’ and suggested that under the banner of neoliberalism capital forces now shapes the contents and possibilities of political values and social relations. I also argued that

neoliberalism first required the (re-)emergence of security-sector fusions as a positive condition for its historical ascent. In short, capital could not have “finally [become] God,” as Brown put it, absent a prior production of fatherland-less security governance structures which are now more capable than political states of constructing transitory, *ad hoc* distinctions between friends and enemies, of producing “new threshold zones” and new forms of inclusion and exclusion. In this way, security-sector fusions enable remote capital forces to reorganize the social structure of coercive powers and authorities across geographic contexts, and they sublimate the political and legal logics of modernity.

Following my introduction, I continued this line of reasoning but in reverse, so to speak, as I next turned to the deeper history of force contracting models. In Chapter 2, I developed an account of the historical relationships between political forms on the one hand, and the social organization of coercive powers and authorities on the other, and I suggested there are quasi-formal links between political forms and the social structure of security governance during any period of study. I underscored the fact that on a long-enough historical timeline, modern nation-state militaries and public policing agencies are relatively strange institutional configurations, and I built on this claim to additionally suggest that it makes much more sense to frame contemporary force hybridization movements as a return to, rather than a departure from, historical norms. From there, I consulted the historical studies of Sean McFate, Benjamin Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and Andrew Phillips to reveal how changes within the social structure of security governance led to the development and spread of both the nation-state system and the public-private distinction in both European and colonial contexts. This narration led, in turn, to a methodological discussion centered on Zayab Quadri’s excellent work on the roles played by

PMCs in Iraq. In reference to Quadri's work, I added that the study of contemporary security-sector fusions gains clarity by expanding the historical framing we bring to bear on their analysis. The dialectics of state and empire, I concluded, are not simply on repeat, they are altering the very nature of the nation-state and the liberal law forever.

In the next chapter, *Whither the State? Contemporary Force Hybridizations and the Public-Private Distinction*, I then moved out of my deeper historical consideration into the more recent past. In this chapter, I developed one of my two core arguments, that contemporary security-sector fusions put into eclipse the modern public-private distinction and I constructed this argument in two ways. First, I offered comparisons between 20th and 21st security governance practices by drawing from a wide range of humanistic and social scientific inquiries. These comparisons were then amplified by my presentation of an extensive survey of 21st century security-sector hybridizations. Following my survey, my second approach was to then trace the historical forces that pushed public, private, and international institutions, both in the US and beyond, toward ever greater degrees of reliance upon non-state force actors. By tracing the etiology of contemporary security-sector fusions, I was thus able to show how a number of mutually reinforcing lines of economic, technological, ideological, and geopolitical development all contributed to the formation of novel security-sector alignments.

Again, this first argument about how security-sector fusions dissolve the meaning of the public-private distinction was only one of the two principle arguments I made in this dissertation. Correspondingly, in Chapter 4, *Theorizing Security-Sector Fusions as Nation-State Entropy* I next set out to explain why I believe security-sector fusions drive processes of nation-state decline. In this chapter, I started by discussing approaches to security-sector fusions which focus

on the putatively anti-democratic implications of contemporary security-sector reforms, but then, even as I did not outright disagree with them, I did suggest they hamper our ability to appreciate the full scope and significance of changing security governance paradigms. To ‘get around’ these debates, I then turned toward two theoretical frameworks offered by the international relations scholar Sean McFate and the political scientists Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams. By names, these were neomedieval theory and global security assemblage theory, respectively. Their theories gave me perspectives, lexicons, and information that I needed to illustrate how security-sector fusions factor into widespread processes of nation-state decline. Yet as pivotal as these theories were for the development of my dissertation, as I ultimately concluded these theories do not say enough on their own terms about the differences between politicized identities and desires within the political futures they nearly identically imagine. So to address this gap, I concluded Chapter 4 by briefly touching upon Eve Tuck’s critique of assemblage theory to help me illuminate the disappearance of the subject-position within NT and GSAT.

Liberalism and its Discontents: A Lingering Question

As I mentioned, I want to end this dissertation research and writing project by beginning to imagine what its conclusions might mean for the future of emancipatory projects. To be sure, the meanings of liberalism for various emancipatory projects are nearly always negative in connotation; that is, liberalism and the system of property relations liberalism subtends, the border logics it generates, and the political states it has produced are often portrayed as political formations which must first be overcome, seized, sublated, superseded, dismantled or whatever else as a precondition for the success of programs of justice, transnational solidarity, subaltern liberation, or other programmatic ends. To bring this claim into sharper focus, consider the

following example. In his 2020 presidential address to the American Studies Association (ASA), former ASA president Scott Kurashige encouraged the “revolutionary subject” to “reject the liberal project of state recognition” and “to struggle against the bourgeois, colonial, white supremacist, heteropatriarchal, and ableist exclusions and marginalizations of the liberal social and academic order” (312).¹ In addition to rejecting liberal state recognition, Kurashige also exhorted this revolutionary subject to reject “Eurocentrism, linear ideas of development, false universalisms, and the reification of ideological assertions of objectivity— [because they are] all reinforcing structures of domination” (314).² Finally— and very much to the point I am making here— above all else the revolutionary subject will need to “surpass state-based forms of sovereignty.”³ In these ways, according to Kurashige, scholars and activists can begin to “build the revolution toward a new social order as we struggle with the degeneration of the existing one” (309).⁴ Clearly, then, the liberal imaginary is central to the critical visions of at least this strand within the wider class of emancipatory discourses.

Of course, the total oeuvre of emancipatory discourses and projects is as broad as it is complex, so I don’t mean to suggest that this one example perfectly captures every theory of change, whether that’s within the ASA or American Studies more generally, or beyond. However, I also do not think it is unfair or misleading to suggest that what Kurashige expresses in this address is not simply a singular viewpoint, but as he himself reflects in this speech is a condensed version of numerous revolutionary constituencies’ ideas and political commitments. In that sense, the viewpoints Kurashige is here attempting to summarize clearly converge on the

¹ Kurashige, Scott. *Unruly Subjects*

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

idea that, to repeat the point, the liberal nation-state framework “only reinforces structures of domination.” So while I want to avoid the idea that every emancipatory logic always everywhere takes first aim at the politics of recognition— although of course they do frequently do that— there is also nevertheless a tendency for different emancipatory projects to view liberalism as the *enfant terrible* of history. Does liberalism *only* produce structures of domination? Well, yes and no. This ‘yes and no,’ I confess, is ambiguous, and I do not want to get too sidetracked by it. It is a separate and complex conversation that perhaps the reader will generously allow me to postpone, for now.

So instead, let me simply observe that Kurashige’s summary rejection of the politics of recognition forecloses in advance any number of responses to it. In the moment of its articulation, it invites no qualifications or caveats whatsoever. To be fair, political speeches often do that, but all the same I still wish to insert one line of thought that, while not mine, points in very much the same direction as my own thinking. In a relatively recent dialogue between Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, subsequently published under the title of *Dispossession: the Performative in the Political*, these two philosophers are reflecting at length on the theme of “surviving recognition”, and then Butler arrives at an uncertain but nonetheless broadly illuminating formulation.⁵ This is how Butler oh-so-perfectly frames the issue:

It is a fine question, how to survive liberal recognition. But perhaps it is linked with another question: how do we survive without it? With respect to liberalism, Spivak once wrote that it was 'that which we cannot not want,' and I have found myself returning to this 'cannot not want' time and again. The formulation implies that wanting is itself compelled by social and political categories, which means that such categories are not only objects of desire, but also historical conditions of desire. It is one thing to say that I cannot not want liberalism, as much as I wish I could not want it, and so to treat liberalism as an object I cannot do without. It is yet another matter to claim that without the horizon and instruments of liberalism, I cannot want at all, that

⁵ Butler, Judith. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*.

what I call my desire is so bound up with these categories that without them I may find myself not desiring at all, and so not find myself at all (77)⁶

There is a lot to unpack here, and I will not be tracking all the directions in which this formulation moves, but at the very least Butler's ideas here suggest that even if theoretical and programmatic rejections of liberal state recognition can be justified through reference to liberalism's historical contributions to 'structures of domination,' in a very unpredictable way these sorts of criticism introduce a certain void into our practical and theoretical thinking about the political futures some say they desire when they state they desire the end of this political form. Not only does this void disintegrate the historical foundations of anti-liberal political desires and identities—perhaps for the better; perhaps for the worse— more importantly, the quote suggests that the political conditions for restraint that liberalism awkwardly and differentially manages are equally dis-imagined when we are 'not wanting' liberalism. Again, this is a much broader conversation, but at a minimum what I am foregrounding here is that there is more than one way to think about the end of the liberal politics of recognition, and not all of them are congenial to emancipatory projects. In one version, the demise of liberalism somehow— it is never really clear to me how— course corrects the historical injustices that liberalism undeniably produced and profited from; but, in the other, the demise of liberalism also erodes the very foundations of scaled models of political inclusion and exclusion.

In connection with my dissertation, Butler and Athanasiou's meddling with 'pure' rejections of the liberal politics of recognition also help me to put Kurashige's exhortations toward "revolutionary praxis" into conversation with the results of my study into the social and political impacts of security-sector fusions. As I argued, security-sector fusions engender a post-

⁶ Ibid

liberal legal and political order characterized by the emergence of novel political lamellae independently pursuing their rational self-interests under intensifying conditions of political heteronomy; and this, I think, gets to the heart of my aforementioned paradox. To primarily ground revolutionary political desires on a negation of liberal forms of inclusion and exclusion and their ancillary legal coordinates paradoxically links such emancipatory ambitions with those of today's most ardent enthusiasts of post-national capitalism. As developed by the cultural philosopher Zahi Zalloua, one of the most bizarre and new-theory-deserving developments in contemporary economic and political life is the extent to which revolutionary and counterrevolutionary political discourses have converged on a belief that the modern liberal state is incapable of satisfying their divergent political desires.⁷ This is an important caveat, so let me linger with it a moment longer.

In examining this paradox, Zalloua routes it through an extended list of what I will provisionally call 'leftist' versions of the rejection of liberal political theory and practice. There are other conversations at play here, but for my own purposes this line of thought is the most important. Having demonstrated the centrality of anti-liberalism to an array of emancipatory platforms, Zalloua then wryly observes their rhetorical proximity to emerging critiques of liberalism such as they appear in champions of contemporary capital, stating, for instance, that "global capitalism's ideological investment in democracy and equality... is waning [and] the erosion of formal equality is taking place all across the world" (107-108); and even more to my point, "that the marriage between capitalism and liberal democracy is over" (7).⁸ From this viewpoint, at least some emancipatory discourses must now grapple with the added reality that

⁷ Zalloua, Zahi. *Zizek on Race*

⁸ Ibid

today's globalized markets are giving birth to political desires emancipatory discourses themselves express wanting. In that sense, the liberal politics of recognition represent a double-barrier: first to emancipatory visions, and second, to neo-capital. Therefore, with respect to the rejection of liberalism maintained by Kurashige's version of revolutionary subjectivity, were it to advance or succeed it would produce outcomes not entirely different from the advance of capital forces. So, while it goes without saying that figures such as Peter Thiel and then my foil, Scott Kurashige, are probably not imagining one and the same political future, there is still a very real sense in which they are pointing at one and the same barrier to the accomplishment of their divergent political visions.

This unity of opposites may bring about the "new social order," but whether this order approximates the 'new international' of post-liberal solidarity, or it is simply produces a reshuffled deck of political inclusions and exclusions remains to be seen. But for fun, let's quickly play these two futures out, at least in theory. To avoid 'domination structures,' as Kurashige called them, the new international will of course need to be comprised of maximally heterogenous subjectivities. Furthermore, despite the otherwise disparate identities and beliefs held by the members of this new international, they will also need to maintain fidelity to an 'authentic' universalism as opposed to liberalism's "false universalism." Otherwise, the new international will come apart. By contrast, global capital forces need only overcome liberal nationalism and the politics of recognition to achieve their political desires, which is a far lower bar in comparison. What this means is that for critical projects to cast their political and legal critiques in terms of an across-the-board rejection of the politics of recognition, it is not inconceivable that they are at the same time inadvertently belying the very conditions and

constraints which have the ‘actually existing’ capacity to advance their emancipatory programs into the future. Contra Marxist teleology— and it shows up more often than one might think, but again, I digress—there are *never not political insides and outsides!* So even if the liberal form were vanquished tomorrow, the liberal state ‘seized’ so that it can subsequently ‘wither away,’ in no way would that entail the end of the politics of recognition, only the termination of one historical iteration of that politics. What has come to light through the study of security-sector fusions, I contend, is that the ‘withering away of the state’ is not going as Engels predicted it would. Far from it, in fact.

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