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# GENDER AND PRIVATE SECURITY IN GLOBAL POLITICS

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## Gender and Private Security in Global Politics

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Edited by Maya Eichler

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To Ann and Cynthia, for paving the way



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I dedicate this book to two leading figures of feminist international relations—J. Ann Tickner and Cynthia Enloe—who paved the way for so many of us. Without their scholarship and example, I doubt that asking feminist questions about private security in global politics would have been possible in the first place. They have taught us to speak truth to power, question what is taken for granted, and listen carefully to those on the margins of international relations. Without asking feminist questions, they have insisted, we know less and are collectively worse off. This book is motivated by the kind of feminist questioning and scholarship that Ann and Cynthia have pioneered.

Over the past few years, a small but dedicated group of scholars has worked to develop feminist and feminist-informed analyses of security privatization and private military and security companies (PMSCs). In assembling this volume it was my goal to bring these scholars together and both showcase and advance this emerging research. The chapters make it evident that there are *multiple* ways of studying private security through gendered lenses. In this volume we have not exhausted feminist analyses of private security but instead aimed to inspire others to ask feminist questions and further develop the emerging field of “critical gender studies in private security.” It has been my utmost privilege to work with the contributors to this volume. I am grateful to each one of them for agreeing to be part of this project. Without their commitment the volume would not have materialized. I thank Anna Leander for her enthusiasm for this project and for supplying such an insightful afterword.

Several of the contributors to this volume participated in ISA panels on gender and private security. In 2012 I organized the panel “Gender and the Privatization of Military Security,” and in 2013 Amanda Chisholm

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and I co-organized the panel “Silences and Margins: Interrogating the Intersections of Gender, Race, Class, and Citizenship in Private Security.” I thank the panel discussants—Anna Leander and Cynthia Enloe respectively—and the audience members for their engagement and comments. The Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Section of the ISA has offered important institutional space that encourages and enables the kind of research presented in this book.

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The idea for this volume was born during a Gender and International Security Fellowship at the Harvard Kennedy School in 2010–2011 that offered support to me at a critical phase in my academic career. I also acknowledge the financial support I received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellowship and the Lilian Robinson Visiting Scholars Program at the Simone De Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University while working on this edited volume. The Department of Geography at the University of Toronto, my institutional home for the past few years, was a most welcoming and intellectually stimulating place, in particular with Deborah Cowen as my postdoctoral supervisor. The final stages of work on this volume were completed at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, my new home. As I embark on this new phase in my academic career, I am once again reminded of the importance of collaboration and mentoring as key values of feminist scholarship (and activism). I look forward to new opportunities to learn from my colleagues and students in order to advance together our understanding of the world and make it a truly more secure and just place for all to live.

Maya Eichler  
Halifax

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CDU	Conduct and Discipline Unit
CE	Council of Europe
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CIVPOL	Civilian Police
CP	Close Protection
ED	Erectile Dysfunction
EUPM	European Union Police Mission
GPE	Global Political Economy
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICJ	International Committee of Jurists
ICOC	International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers
ICOCA	International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers' Association
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IPOA	International Peace Operations Association
IPTF	International Police Task Force
IR	International Relations
ISOA	International Stability Operations Association
KBR	Kellogg Brown & Root
LN	Local Nationals
LOGCAP	Logistics Civil Augmentation Program
MEJA	Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PMSCs	Private Military and Security Companies
POGO	Project on Government Oversight
PSD	Personal Security Detail



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RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SFOR	NATO-led Stabilization Force
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOMA	Status of Mission Agreement
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
TCNs	Third-Country Nationals
TVPRA	Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act
UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UN-INSTRAW	United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
UNMIBH	United Nations Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOIGWG	United Nations Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNWGM	United Nations Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Violating Human Rights and Impeding the Exercise of the Rights of Peoples to Self-Determination
USDOD	United States Department of Defense
USDOS	United States Department of State
USGAO	United States Government Accountability Office
VAW	Violence Against Women

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## Gender and Private Security in Global Politics



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# Gender and the Privatization of Military Security

## *An Introduction*

MAYA EICHLER

The past two to three decades have witnessed the increasing privatization of military security in Western states, with significant repercussions for global politics. Private military and security companies (PMSCs), especially those based in the United States and United Kingdom, have become central participants in contemporary warfare, selling services such as armed protection, training, intelligence, and logistical support to state and nonstate actors. It is estimated that the size of the global private security industry increased twofold between 1990 and 1999 (to USD 100 bln) and again doubled in size between 2000 and 2010 (Leander 2010, 209). The U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in particular led to burgeoning demand for private military and security services. In both wars, private contractors outnumbered or closely trailed U.S. troop numbers (see, for example, USDoD 2011).

It may be all too obvious to the casual observer (and therefore of little interest to the scholar) that the field of private military security is intensely gendered. The image of burly, masculine private contractors has become widespread over the past two decades, especially in media coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Private contractors have been cast, like mercenaries were previously, as the “whores of war” opposite the “just warriors” of state militaries. Reports which allege poor financial accountability, impunity for war crimes, and disregard for local populations but also sexual harassment and human trafficking have plagued the private military and security

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industry. In this context, the industry has begun to pay more attention to “women” and “gender” if only for the sake of reputation and revenue. Yet as gender is gaining in significance within the realm of private security, we continue to know relatively little about how and to what effect the privatization of military security is gendered.

This book brings together key scholars in the emerging research area of “critical gender studies in private security.” The contributors to this volume contend that the privatization of military security is a deeply gendered process, with gendered underpinnings and effects. The contributors employ a variety of feminist perspectives, including critical, postcolonial, poststructuralist, liberal, and queer feminist perspectives, as well as a wide range of methodological approaches such as ethnography, participant-observation, genealogy, deconstruction, and discourse analysis. Located at the intersection of international relations (IR), security studies, and gender studies, this volume aims to push research in two key directions. First, it establishes gender as key analytical category for the study of private security in global politics, thus introducing new research questions and methods to private security scholarship. Second, the volume advances the field of feminist security studies by contributing new empirical and theoretical insights into the gendering of security today.

Gender is often misunderstood as being interchangeable with women, but a feminist-informed gender analysis goes beyond adding women and stirring. While this book does ask where the women are in the private military and security industry and how they have been affected by PMSCs in the field, the book as a whole offers an analysis of the varied ways in which masculinities and femininities constitute, and are constituted by, private security in global politics, with particular consequences for the global social order. The contributors interrogate security privatization as a gendered process, and the private military and security industry as a crucial site for the (re)production and contestation of gender norms in contemporary warfare and global politics.

The book not only contends that security privatization cannot be fully grasped without a consideration of gender but also presents a framework for studying security privatization from a critical gender perspective that emphasizes intersectionality, multiple scales, and the political nature of PMSCs. Collectively, the chapters in this book demonstrate that gender, in intersection with citizenship, national identity, race, class, and sexuality, is shaped by, at the same time as it helps constitute, the practices of PMSCs and their employees along with public perceptions of private contractors. The contributors to the volume recognize gender as a key structure in the multiscale politics of security privatization, or, put differently, that security privatization is a gendered political process that takes place at and through multiple scales. Furthermore, we see PMSCs not simply as suppliers of security and

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security-related services but also as political actors who contribute to the production of gendered social hierarchies and the global social order. After locating this volume in the literatures on security privatization and feminist IR/security studies, I outline in more detail the framework of the book and describe how the individual chapters contribute to its development.

## PRIVATE SECURITY IN GLOBAL POLITICS

Scholarship on the privatization of military security and PMSCs has proliferated in recent years across a number of disciplines, including political science, IR, international law, sociology, criminology, philosophy, geography, and business. Scholars in political science and IR have aimed to explain security privatization and assess its impact on the state's monopoly on legitimate force as well as to define, categorize, and regulate PMSCs (Singer 2003; Avant 2005; Kinsey 2006). In his seminal article and later book *Corporate Warriors*, Peter Singer (2001/02; 2003) identified a gap in the security market at the end of the Cold War, the changing nature of warfare, and neoliberalism as driving forces behind security privatization. Elke Krahnmann (2010) more recently argued that the underlying ideology of civil-military relations (republican or neoliberal) plays a key part in explaining the willingness of state actors to privatize military security. Scholars have investigated how private force can enhance a state's military power but can also weaken transparency in states with high state capacity and increase vulnerability and conflict in states with weaker state capacity (Singer 2003; Avant 2005; Avant 2006). Much scholarly effort has gone into defining and delineating PMSCs in relation to mercenaries (Percy 2007), with most authors arguing that they represent a novel form of security actor despite their historical antecedents. Finally, much of the literature on security privatization has been driven by the practical challenge of how to regulate the industry and hold PMSCs politically, legally, and financially accountable. Here the existing institutional and legal frameworks have generally been deemed inadequate while industry initiatives toward self-regulation or voluntary regulation have been met with skepticism (Chesterman and Lehnardt 2007; De Nevers 2009; Carmola 2010; Dickinson 2011; Tonkin 2011). The research field of security privatization and PMSCs is highly dynamic, and contemporary scholarship goes well beyond these key themes. For example, lately more attention is being paid to the relationship between various security actors such as PMSCs, NGOs, and state forces in order to understand the complexities of today's military operations (Dunigan 2011; Berndtsson 2013; Birthe 2013), while questions of regulation, accountability, and ethics continue to be at the forefront of scholarly debates on private security (Tonkin 2011; Francioni and Ronzitti 2011; Huskey 2012).

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Critical security studies scholars have made important contributions to research on private security. Importantly, they have questioned the public-private distinction that informs much scholarship on private security (Leander 2005; Krahmman 2008; Owens 2008; Abrahamsen and Williams 2011). As Patricia Owens (2008) argues, “there is no such thing as public or private violence. There is only violence that is *made* ‘public’ and violence that is *made* ‘private’” (979). In analyzing the effects of security privatization on the state, critical scholars contend that security privatization should not be equated with the erosion of state power or its monopoly on legitimate force. Instead, security privatization is best conceived of in terms of a broader transformation in governance that involves public/private and local/global actors as part of global security assemblages (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011) and the commercialization of security practices in both public and private spheres (Leander 2010). Critical scholars see security as essentially contested and political, and recognize that privatization involves not only a change in supplier but a reshaping of security itself (Krahmann 2008). Anna Leander (2005), for example, shows that security privatization reinforces militarized notions of security while depoliticizing security issues.

Feminist-informed gender scholarship has developed within, and draws on, this critical scholarship on security privatization but foregrounds gender, a hitherto neglected area of study within both mainstream and critical approaches. Feminist and critical gender scholars have investigated the significance of (hegemonic and subordinate) masculinities in the private security industry (Barker 2009; Chisholm 2010, 2014a, 2014b; Via 2010; Higate 2012a, 2012c, 2012d, 2012e) as well as examined security privatization as a process of remasculinization (Schneiker and Joachim 2012c; Stachowitsch 2013). Feminist scholars have also begun to address the lack of accountability of PMSCs toward female employees and local women in the field (Sperling 2009; Vrdoljak 2011). Taking a security studies perspective, Laura Sjoberg (2013) has conceptualized security privatization as a gendered state strategy in war that takes advantage of the gendered invisibility of the private sphere. This volume builds on and advances these existing feminist and critical gender studies contributions to scholarship on security privatization.

The book focuses on the recent outsourcing in Western states of military functions and military work to the private sector and the concomitant rise of PMSCs in global politics. The chapters in this volume primarily deal with the key players in the industry, that is, the U.S. and UK companies that operate globally. The book does not address the deeper historical phenomenon of mercenaries and mercenary armies or the broader phenomenon of private force in global politics, which includes pirates and non-state armed groups. The book deals with the market in security and security-related services in the context of warfare and to a lesser extent peacekeeping. While focusing on international war- and peacemaking, it is worth acknowledging that this

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global market for force cannot easily be separated from the market in domestic commercial security services that has sprung up globally (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011). Both international and domestic private security are manifestations of the larger neoliberalization of security and the increasing securitization of public and private life at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Various terms have been used to describe the private companies whose employees perform the work previously carried out by military personnel. Scholars refer to private military firms (Singer 2003), private security companies (Avant 2005), and private military companies (Leander 2005). The most common term used in the scholarly literature, however, is private military and security companies—PMSCs—and it is this term that is used throughout the book to refer to the globally operating companies that sell a combination of services ranging from logistical support for military operations, armed and unarmed security services, military training, intelligence, and more. While smaller companies might focus on one or two of these services, larger companies often sell an array of military support and security services. The term “contractor” or “defense contractor” also appears in the book to refer to the employees of PMSCs, and the term “third-country national” (TCN) is used when speaking of employees who are citizens of neither the company’s host country nor the country of operation. Overall, the book deals with three distinct aspects of private security in global politics: the processes of military security privatization, the companies themselves (the PMSCs), and the employees of PMSCs (contractors). It is, then, a book about both the structural changes *and* the agents shaping and shaped by the privatization of military security.

## **GENDER AND SECURITY**

What distinguishes the contributors to this book is that they analyze private security through a primary (though not exclusive) focus on gender. Feminist scholars in IR (and other disciplines) distinguish between gender and biological sex to underscore that the meanings associated with masculinity and femininity are socially constructed rather than biologically given, and therefore vary across place and time.<sup>1</sup> Gender refers to the expectations, behaviors, and norms associated with being a man or woman in particular historical, cultural, social, and economic contexts. Feminist scholarship is interested in understanding how gender has been used to justify hierarchies and unequal power relations between people designated as “women” and “men.” Thus gender is more than a variable—it is intrinsically linked to gendered relations of power that are reflected in processes of masculinization and feminization. Crucially, gender is “a primary way of signifying relationships of



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