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Private Security Contractors in Darfur:

Reflecting and Reinforcing Neo-Liberal Governmentality

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Abstract:
This article argues that the role of Private Security Contractors in Darfur reflects and reinforces neo-liberal governmentality in contemporary security governance. It is an argument (in line with other articles in this special issue) which is more interested in discussing how the privatization of security alters security practices (including those involving states) than in thinking about their impact on an idealised public monopoly on the use of force. To make its point, the article begins by drawing on Foucauldian work to clarify the meaning of neo-liberal governmentality in security. It underlines that governance is increasingly taking place through a set of (quasi-) markets, it is marked by entrepreneurial values, and a hands off approach to governance. We then discuss the way this overall change is reflected in and reinforced by the role of private security contractors in Darfur. Drawing on a framework of analysis inspired by Bourdieu, we show that neo-liberal governmentality is reflected in the *dispositions* of security actors as well as in their relative *positions*. The resulting security practices reinforce dispositions and positions that reproduce neo-liberal governmentality. Looking at these processes is necessary to understand the role of private security contractors in Darfur. But more than this, practices in Darfur entrench neo-liberal governmentality in security more generally. The managerial and 'de-politicizing' approach to security in Darfur displaces alternative views not only in the Darfuri context. It is taken into other contexts where it bolsters neo-liberal governmentality. This spiralling neo-liberal governmentality rather than diminished state control and authority is, we argue, the most significant consequence of the presence of private security contractors in Darfur.

Introduction

Since 2003 the violence and extensive human rights abuse in the Darfur region (Western Sudan) has received considerable international attention. A 'long war' of attrition in which the government in Khartoum (and its colonial predecessors) have neglected and oppressed a region that has responded by ruling itself is the background of the present conflict (Flint and de Waal 2005; Prunier 2005). The latest wave of open violence opposes the Janjaweed militia and two rebel movements protesting oppression and neglect: the JEM (Justice and Equality Movement associated with the Zaghawa population) and the SLM (Sudan Liberation Movement associated with the Fur and Masalit populations). In February 2003, the rebels groups attacked government forces and installation. According to the government, the Janjaweed militias took the situation in their own hands in an attempt to defend themselves against the rebels. According to all other accounts, the government accepted, coordinated, organised, paid and militarily supported the militia. The consequence has been what Colin Powel, then undersecretary of state, termed genocide. Looting, raping, and mass killings have displaced some 2,4 million persons to refugee camps in Darfur and another 250,000 to camps in Chad (Human Rights Watch). In total, some 3 million people are dependent on international emergency aid (Annan 2006).

Throughout this crisis international involvement has been extensive. International observers and monitors, aid and human rights organizations have documented and informed about the evolving conflict. The international community has tried to mediate the ongoing conflict. Besides mediating in the conflict, the international community has been militarily involved. The African Union has deployed a 3000 men strong peacekeeping force – the AMIS (the African Union Mission in Sudan) – which is indirectly supported by the UNMIS.[1] Moreover, NATO has agreed to back up the force and the Security Council is currently under strong pressure to clarify the UN engagement in the conflict. And, as in all other major contemporary conflicts, private security contractors have been present in the Darfur crisis. Pacific Engineers (PAE), DynCorp and Medical Solutions Services have worked for humanitarians and armed forces. Contractors emphasize that the 'first people on the ground in Darfur were the employees of private firms', they see their role as essential and would like to increase it (Pugliese 2005). Blackwater has even gone so far as to suggest that contractors

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[1] UN Mission in Sudan monitors the 'Comprehensive Peace Agreement' between the government and the southern rebel groups, but does not cover Darfur.

(from Blackwater specifically) should be allowed to take on a more extensive and independent peace-keeping role in the conflict.

The private contractor presence runs against established international practice. Since the mid-19th Century military operations are the preserve of state armed forces (Thomson 1994). Even if conventions banning mercenarism – in particular the UN Convention against the use and financing of mercenaries and the AU Convention – have not been signed by all states and are rather ineffective and even if a market for military services has never ceased to exist, in principle private military operations are illegitimate in international society. This makes it paradoxical that private contractors in a situation such as Darfur not only inform about their activities there, but advertise them loudly and make general demands for an increased role. The contractors face a rather serious legitimacy problem: they are balancing on the fine line between being (legitimate) providers of security services and being (illegitimate) providers of military services. The gist of our argument is that to understand the paradoxical behaviour private contractors in Darfur it is necessary to situate it in the context of evolving security governance. The shift in security governance towards Foucauldian neo-liberal governmentality sets the context for explaining this behaviour. This context alters the practices of actors (private and public) in the field of security. This in turn reshapes security governance. It reinforces a depoliticized understanding of security central to neo-liberal governance not only in Darfur but more generally.

Neo-Liberal Governmentality in Security

As Abrahamsen and Williams argue in this volume, 'the rise of private authority is part of a broader shift in the relationship between the public and private sectors, and involves substantial transformations in the form and exercise of public as well as private power.' This broader shift can be (and has been) named and thought of in many different ways. The name we want to introduce for our discussion is 'neo-liberal governmentality'.[2] We want to suggest that this specifically Foucauldian name and the approach that goes with it are particularly helpful in capturing the transformation of security governance. One reason is that it moves the focus away from a formalistic state-centred notion of government to governance practices. A second is that the historical accounts of governmentality are useful for capturing the specificity of present neo-liberal forms of governmentality which we argue are visible in the

[2] For more elaborate discussions of this notions and its import for understanding security see e.g. Huysmans (2006) and van Munster (2005).

field of security where its characteristic approach to government, emphasis on entrepreneurial values and the development of quasi markets are reflected and reproduced.

Thinking about security governance in terms of governmentality makes it possible to move beyond the state-centred and formalistic understanding of governance. The notion 'governmentality' was introduced by Foucault to capture different historical modalities of government while strongly signalling a wish to avoid privileging the state or its executive body (Foucault 2003)[3]. The central idea is that the government that matters is that of the discourses that constitute actors and their practices. This government is expressed and produced through multiple forms of subjugation of subjects and even more, it is inherent in subject identity. Governmentality is in other words expressed in a combination of decentralized activities and practices. It is about how the conduct of people is modulated by means of private and public procedures, practices and technologies (Foucault 1991, 103). The state, then, cannot be taken as the locus of all (sovereign) power but only as a domain and principle of application.[4]

> [T]he question is no longer one of accounting for government in terms of the "power of the State", but of ascertaining how, and to what extent, the state is articulated into the activity of government: what relations are established between political and other authorities; what funds, forces, persons, knowledge or legitimacy are utilized; and by means of what devices and techniques are these different tactics made operable (Rose and Miller 1992, 177).

In order to think about the implications of private security we find this focus helpful since it directs attention away from whether or not the state is losing control/authority to the more substantial issue of what privatization means for practices in the security field.

More specifically we find that the substantive account given of these evolving forms of government useful for capturing the specific nature of current 'neo-liberal' governmentality. In the genealogy of governmentalization, *liberalism* is an art of governing that emerged in the 18th and 19th century in response to more interventionist modes of governing in the 16th and

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[3] Foucault gives the following definition of the term: 'By governmentality I mean three things […] I mean the set of procedures, analysis and reflections, the calculations and the tactics that make possible the exercise of the specific (although very complex) power which has as its aim the population, as its key form of knowledge political economy and as essential technical instrument security measures. Secondly, by 'governmentality' I mean the tendency, the line of force, tending since a very long time to establish in the Western world, the type of power which one could call 'government' as dominant in relation to other forms or power: sovereignty, discipline […] Finally, by governmentality I think on must understand the process, or rather the result of the process, by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages and the administrative state of the 15th and 16th Centuries is governmentaized little by little (Foucault 2004b, 112 our translation).

[4] Foucault rhetorically asks: 'What if the state was nothing but a way of governing; if the state was nothing but a type of governmentality?' (Foucault 2004a 252, our translation).

the 17th century (Foucault 2004a). Liberalism did not supplant earlier forms of government. Rather, 'we have in fact a triangle: sovereignty, discipline and governmental management; a management whose principal target is the population and whose essential mechanisms are security measures' (Foucault 2004a, 111, our translation). However, by contrast to earlier forms of government, liberalism emphasised the limitation of direct state intervention. Order should not be manufactured through centralised intervention in the affairs of society (Foucault 2000, 352). Rather, the crux of the liberal art of government is 'not to impede in the course of things, but to ensure the play of 'natural' and 'necessary' modes of regulations: *manipuler, susiter, faciliter, laissez-faire*' (Foucault, cited in Gordon 1991: 17, emphasis in original). Liberalism in other words, draws on indirect techniques and a hands-off approach to government which 'involves less a retreat from governmental 'intervention' than a re-inscription of the techniques and forms of expertise required for the exercise of government' (Barry et al. 1996, 14).

Neo-liberalism gives an entrepreneurial twist to the general liberal hands off approach to government by emphasising the creation of quasi-markets and entrepreneurial values. It subject existing governmental practices to modes of expertise that are drawn from the private sector with the result that the social is increasingly reconfigured as a series of markets and quasi-markets:

> Entrepreneurial governments promote competition between service providers. They empower citizens by pushing control out of the bureaucracy into the community. They measure the performance of their agencies, focusing not on inputs but on outcomes … They decentralize authority, embracing participatory government. They prefer market mechanisms to bureaucratic mechanisms. And they focus not simply on providing public services but on catalyzing all sectors – public, private and voluntary – into action to solve their community's problem (Osborne and Gaebler, cited in Du Gay 2002, 17-18).

Neo-liberal governmentality situates human activity within an economic calculus. It relocates activities from the public realm to the market by means of direct privatisation, public/private partnerships, outsourcing, the creation of new markets, the making of internal markets and the establishment of conditions for competitive success (Clarke 2004, 35-6). Both public and private actors are responsibilized through neo-liberal tools such as benchmarking, 'best practice' schemes, performance indicators and auditing. These have a disciplining function insofar as they make free agents behave according to formal standards that ensure efficiency, quality and effectiveness measured in terms of productivity. They are technologies of responsibilization, that shape how private *and* public actors understand and govern themselves.

Far from new in other fields,[5] the appropriation of the neo-liberal modality of governing in the field of international security is of recent date. This might seem paradoxical since security and risk technologies are an essential part of neo-liberal governmentality generally. However, the centrality of state-based thinking and the strong affirmation of state control over security has limited the impact of these techniques on the security sector itself. During the bipolar Cold War, the security order was closely tied to the governmental paradigm of sovereignty. The focus on nuclear weapons and the great power competition made (international) security appear as a quintessentially public responsibility to be provided through practices as the arms race, diplomacy, alliance-building, containment, border control and policing. With the end of the Cold War this changed. As the binary great power competition ceased to monopolize attention, discourses on globalization and discourses about alternative security threats (failed states, immigration, terrorism, etc.) made their way into the field of security. Security professionals played a central role in bringing about this shift (Bigo 2000) which has led to far reaching questioning of the traditional state domination of the security field and to a 'normalization' marked by the growing centrality of neo-liberal governmentality.

The governmentalization of the field of security has been quick. The domination of neo-liberal discourses of New Public Management in other areas of public administration and the creation of transnational discourse communities (Hansen and Salskov-Iversen 2005) is part of the explanation. It provides the general context and vocabulary for changes in the security field. It also creates the impression that the security field is 'lagging behind'. Neo-liberal governmentality in the field of security is consequently being implemented with the zealousness of the newly converted (Markusen 2003). Moreover, the self-reinforcing nature of the process is equally important for the scope and speed of change. The mobilization of insecurity and fear are open to the construction of new problems and the marketing of new solutions. The market of 'security' generates its own demand insofar as the social perception of threat, created through the marketing of security solutions which is also the production of fear, becomes a function of the security mobilization itself (Leander, 2005).

Neo-liberal governmentality in the field of security takes two concrete expressions. First, governance through quasi-markets has resulted in extensive *privatization.* This process

[5] As governmentality scholars have pointed out, neoliberal modes of governing already operate in a wide variety of social fields varying from local government (Stenson and Watt 1999), social welfare (Dean 1999), crime (Garland 2001), insurance (Ericson et al. 2003), European integration (Walters and Haahr 2005) and globalization (Larner and Walters 2004).

has gone further in some countries and it has obviously taken a variety of forms depending on policy traditions and context (Kaldor, Albrecht et al. 1998) as shown by the contrasting patters of privatization in the US, France, Russia and Iran. This said, the general trend of functional specialization and commodification of security solutions has made complex networks combining public and private actors pivotal in the provision of security services. Second, (and immediately linked) neo-liberal governmentality is expressed in the *responsibilization* of the private and public sphere in an attempt to shape and steer their conduct. Neo-liberal technologies such as benchmarking, 'best practice', performance indicators and auditing do not just increase efficiency. They also have a disciplining function insofar as their aim is to make agents behave according to formal standards that ensure efficiency, quality and effectiveness measured in terms of productivity. These indicators have a disciplining function in that they shape how private *and* public actors understand and govern themselves.

For the purpose of explaining the role of private security contractors in Darfur, reference to this context of neo-liberal governmentality is useful. However, it needs to be contextualised. The effects and modalities of neo-liberal governmentality are uneven and varying across fields. Neo-liberalism is no universal practice with homogenizing tendencies across fields. Rather it should be conceived of as a system of discursive regulation that has been adopted, appropriated and modified in different fields. In order to explore how it has been appropriated in the context of concern to us, we want to look at the role of contractors in the Darfur crisis through Bourdieusian lenses. For whereas the notion of governmentality is useful to describe the 'idealized schemata for representing reality, analyzing it and rectifying it' (Rose and Miller 1992, 178), Bourdieu's social theory helps analyze how such rationalities are actualized on the micro-sociological level in concrete practices.

Private Security in Darfur: Reflecting Struggles over Dispositions and Positions in the Field of Security

To understand how it is possible that private contractors are not only present, but loudly advocate an expanded role for themselves, in a war-like situation such as that in Darfur we suggest the usefulness of thinking about change in the 'field' of security. The evolving neo-liberal governmentality in the security sector is reshaping the dispositions through which security actors understand their own field and their respective roles in it (or their *habitus*).

Neo-liberal governmentality is also producing changes in the value of different forms (symbolic, cultural, social and economic) of capital since the value of any resource is in itself defined by field specific inter-subjectively shared understandings (dispositions). The consequence is a remapping of the *positions* in the field. A change in the dispositions of actors and in their relative (power) positions spells changes in social practices.[6] We will trace these changes by showing the extent to which key neo-liberal governmentality techniques weigh in favour of private contractors in Darfur who (of course) do try to get the most of this shifting context. Specifically, we argue that private contractors speak from an expert position on the Darfur conflict because of the working of responsibilization and privatization on security actors' dispositions and their relative power positions. We contend that this is the backdrop against which their noisy advertising of their own position must be understood.

Responsibilization is a pivotal technique of neo-liberal governmentality. It is crucial to the withdrawal of the state and politics as the responsibility of government is decentralised and located at the level of various social agents. In the Darfur context, this also holds. Responsibilization is brought in by a framing of the crisis in market terms as if there was a given demand for security services that suppliers have a responsibility to meet. There is demand for security on behalf of the Darfur population as well as on behalf of a variety of firms, NGOs, aid agencies and governments working in the region. Suppliers of security have a responsibility to answer this demand; a responsibility now enshrined at the international level by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council. This makes it logical for contractors to argue that they are willing to fill 'the gap' between the supply and the demand for security services on behalf of NGOs, firms as well as locals and public armed forces (Martinet 2004; Pugliese 2005). They are offering to take responsibility for security governance in a situation where it is indeed much needed.

The fact that states do not adequately assume responsibility in this situation further weighs in the private contractors favour. Contractors meet a 'demand' for security services which public forces are neither willing nor able to offer. Indeed, the 'responsibility' of the private sector in security is heightened by the imagery of the invisible hand directing real world complexity far more effectively than administrative planning. Characteristically, the incapacity and unwillingness of the public is contrasted with the efficiency and leanness of the private. Hence, an industry lobbyist explained in a congressional hearing that the UN is

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[6] Field, habitus (dispositions), positions and practices referred to here are drawn from Bourdieu inspired work in sociology. Bourdieu summarizes their relationship as: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice (Bourdieu 1979: 112).

not a ‘poor man’s NATO’ but relies on a ‘hodgepodge of militaries, using different equipment, communications gear, and languages. Military coordination is the exception not the rule. And mandate interpretation varies dramatically between different nationalities’ (Brooks 2004[7]). Underlining the efficiency of private firms Erik Prince, CEO of Blackwater, claimed that there is no ‘need for an 8000 peacekeeper force. You need an NGO-type QRF’ and then went on to explain that private firms can provide such a QRF with a better tooth-to-tail-ratio than public operations’ (quoted in Hodge 2005).The conclusion readily reached is that if private contractors are willing to take responsibility, it is the responsibility of the rest of the world to accept this willingness. A dual responsibilization created through the technique of governing through quasi-markets in other words reconfigures the dispositions of actors in the security field. The role of contractors in Darfur should be understood with reference to this.

Second, the privileging of privatization and entrepreneurial values, central to neo-liberal governmentality, in and of themselves gears the security field to favour contractors. This privileging is stronger in the security field than elsewhere. Private military outfits are assumed to be cost-effective and successful whereas public ones are not. A conclusion reached on the basis of a systematic dismissal of evidence to the contrary as anecdotal and marginal. As a close study of transformation in the defence sector points out, in defence matters the

> [t]he sophistication of social science methodology applied in other areas of public-sector privatisation. Anecdotes about successful cases are often reported as the basis for advocating further privatisation. Although one hears about failures, it is difficult to find written accounts similar to those available from independent analysts working on other sectors (Markusen 2003, 483).

The assessments of the gains from privatization are narrowly drawn (not assessing public costs including investments, or costs of monitoring and excluding non-economic costs), largely prospective rather than retrospective (based on what the private sector promised not what it did), and confined chiefly to cost and not quality assessment (Markusen 1998).

This general neo-liberal ‘bias in favour of private business’ is also palpable in the Darfur context. It is visible in adoption of unorthodox contracting practices used elsewhere for security contractors including ‘cost-plus contracts’ combined with a lack of oversight,

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[7] Doug Brooks heads the International Peacekeeping Operations Association (IPOA) which lobbies for an extended role for the ‘peace and stability industry’ in peacekeeping operations.

auditing and proper contracting procedures.[8] The joint DynCorp and Pacific Architects & Engineers contract, to support the AU troops in Darfur is a case in point. It has been described as an 'indefinite delivery, indefinite quality' contract (Chatterjee 2004). More broadly, the bias for private business shapes the context in which contractors present their role and advocate its enlargement. We need to consider these dispositions to explain that Chris Taylor of Blackwater could make the following statement to a university audience:

> Three thousand African Union troops were deployed in Darfur were violence is widespread and the range of human rights violations is inconceivable. These 3000 AU troops deployed to areas where, not 300 yards away, unimaginable violence was being visited on innocent, defenceless victims but the AU troops were specifically prevented from intervening and protecting the helpless. Their mission was to protect UN observers […next paragraph] Send 10.000 UN troops to Darfur? A colossal waste of money. You do not create security and peace by throwing more mediocre, uncommitted people into the fray. 1000-2000 professional contractors could perform those same stability operations, safely turning over the operation to the UN and other NGOs to perform post-conflict operations. That is what they do best (Taylor 2005).

Note that we move from saying that the AU troops did not intervene – because of their restrictive mandate – to saying that public troops are 'mediocre and uncommitted' and should limit their activities to post-conflict activities, leaving peacekeeping to the private sector.

The evolving disposition of actors in the security field to frame security provision as a matter of responsibility best taken on by private actors is central to shifting the relative positions in the security field. It is no longer the case that private contractors speak from a marginal position in the field. On the contrary, the very fact of being a private security contractor is increasingly a source of symbolic capital. Contractors increasingly resemble a caste of new security experts. It is common to hear public officials underscore the efficiency of private contractors (e.g. Royce 2004; Leander 2006: chapter 5). For example, with reference to stabilizing the situation in Darfur Charles Snyder (the director of Sudan programs for the State department) explained that 'Private companies can do the job more quickly and efficiently in the short term than a government bureaucracy' (Chatterjee 2004).

A correlate of these changes is that contractors take on a growing number of roles in the security sector. Darfur well illustrates the point. Private contractors are providing logistics for troops and security for a variety of organizations, something treated as unproblematic as

[8] A cost plus contract is one where the firm is paid on the basis of its declared costs including a profit margin. There has been extensive discussion of the difficulties of the contractual practices in the sector. For general discussions see e.g. Singer (2003). For a discussion of Iraq (which has received by far the most attention, see GAO (2005) and Isenberg (2004).

visible in the lack of concern over PAE, DynCorp or Medical Support Solutions in Darfur. But the shift in positions is even more clearly reflected in the fact that private contractors are taking over roles that have formerly been the reserve of public or at least civilian organizations. An illustration of this is provided by PAE's contract to provide staff for a Civilian Protection Monitoring Team in Darfur. Concretely, the team is monitoring human rights in Sudan under a state Department contract (Chatterjee 2004). The growing roles translate as more contracts for the contractors. Security contractors have not only gained symbolic capital but also economic capital to strengthen their position in the field of security.

This expanding role for private contractors grants the security contractors a position of authority. They become experts when speaking about the Darfur issue. This is partly so because hen private contractors take over an activity they gain direct control and insight over what is actually happening on the ground. They decide on the implementation. When DynCorp provides logistics for the AU peacekeepers in Darfur it is the key source of information about what kind of materials are needed, in which quantities and from where they should be imported. DynCorp is the expert par excellence on its own business as firms generally are. In addition to this, DynCorp gains more general authority to inform about the situation on the ground in Darfur. It is working there its employees know what they talk about. They can demand to be respected for their expert understanding of the security situation in Darfur. Finally, very often private contractors are charged with analyzing and informing about developments. They are hired as consultants or as experts or as trainers and hence specifically asked to shape the understanding of a situation. In Darfur, PAE is put in charge of monitoring human rights and is in effect asked to provide and shape the general understanding of the situation. Private contractors would also like to see their role in training peacekeepers involved in the conflict expanded.

Private contractors' status as 'experts' is mirrored in their growing visibility in public debate, including that surrounding Darfur. Private contractors have given a string of public lectures where they have drawn attention to the plight of Darfuris in rather general terms. Similarly, Doug Brooks has been invited to a Congressional hearing on the topic of peacekeeping where special attention was paid to Darfur. However, the most interesting example is the petition addressed to the US president and the members of the US congress by the contractor lobby organization. The petition demands 'the use of humanitarian and military aid to Sudan' and is based on a general analysis the situation in Darfur (IPOA 2005). There is no specific reference to the role private security contractors. It is interesting precisely because it illustrates both the degree to which contractors (in this case through their lobby

organization) are becoming respected commentators on security matters *in general* and the degree to which private contractors are aware of the importance of shaping security understandings *in general*.

The elevation of private security contractors and their representatives to an expert status, with a recognised authority to participate in the overall formulation of security policy marks a shift in the security field. In this section we have argued that this shift is directly tied to the spread of neo-liberal governmentality techniques to the security field. We have traced the role of responsibilization and privatization in re-modelling dispositions and re-shuffling positions in this field with constant reference to the example of the role that private contractors have in the Darfur conflict. In fact, we contend that this role only makes sense with reference to the shifts in the security field. In tracing change we have emphasised the shifts in dispositions and positions that make private contractors increasingly visible, audible and privileged. We obviously do not contend that change is without friction and struggle. Some governments have been unwilling to allow private sector to assume responsibility and/or to expand the scope of private contractor presence. South Africa and France are cases to the point. Similarly, (parts of) public military and security establishments have reacted contested and struggled against the ongoing changes (Guillroy 2005). Exploring these struggles in detail would be extremely useful for analyzing the process of change in more detail and for clarifying which countries, groups, and people win and lose in the process. However, we do not want to go down this path. Rather, we want to discuss the broader implications of the change analysed – and more specifically the extent to which the role of private security contractors in Darfur do not only reflect but actually also entrench neo-liberal governmentality in the security field.

Private Security in Darfur, De-politicization and the Entrenchment of Neo-Liberal Governmentality

The presence of private security contractors in Darfur and their advocacy of an enlarged role for themselves in that conflict not only reflect neo-liberal governmentality in the security field: it also reinforces it. It becomes part of a spiralling self-reinforcing process by which neo-liberal governmentality tends to become dominant. It does so by contributing to the de-politicization of the public realm. Security is technocratized or perhaps more adequately 'militarized' as political options are crowded out together with related discussions about

priorities. De-politicization in turn triggers and justifies further state retrenchment and reliance on neo-liberal hands off governmentality techniques operating through markets. We focus primarily on the field of security in Darfur. However, we underscore that the practices in Darfur refashion the more general process of neo-liberal governmentality. Arguments and 'lessons', dispositions and resources from Darfur are used well beyond the Darfur context itself and contribute to entrenching neo-liberal governmentality also elsewhere.

The presence and weight of private contractors in Darfur has the consequence of limiting the role of politics, understood as deliberation in the public realm, surrounding the conflict. A key reason is the way the use of force is regulated institutionally. Uses of force involving the (public) military trigger public political debate in a way that use of force involving private contractors does not. The reason is not that private contractors are unregulated but rather that the regulation is mainly administrative and respectful of private business confidentiality. It is not designed to trigger public discussion. Private contractors are therefore classically used in covert operations and the possibility of circumventing political control and public attention is a key reason for relying on private firms (Silverstein 2000). This situation contrasts starkly with the regulations of (public) military intervention abroad. Here regulation is based on politics. The very idea is that troop involvement *should* – as a matter of normality – set oversight mechanisms in motion and trigger political debate about the problem at hand. This is at the heart of the political and institutional arrangements regulating the use of force in most countries and those who do not have such institutional arrangements are pressured to develop them (Luckham 2003[9]).

In situations such as that in Darfur, where private contractors play a prominent role, this difference in institutional forms of regulation has the effect that the political mechanisms for controlling and debating the use of force are not set in motion.[10] Some (in traditional fashion) read this as the key reason for the use of contractors in the conflict in the first place 'why are we using private contractors to do peace negotiations in Sudan? […] Think of this as somewhere between a cover program run by the CIA and an over programme run by the United States Agency for International Development. It is a way to avoid oversight by Congress' (anonymous US government official quoted in Chatterjee 2004). Others simply

[9] For the reasoning behind this policy and for details on one of the key groups pushing in this direction see DECAF: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control over Armed Forces and its publications at www.dcaf.ch/.

[10] DECAF has brought attention to the difficulty of adopting control and regulation mechanisms to situations where armed forces are employed in multinational operations (??). When contractors are used similar adaptation difficulties occur and are of course compounded if they are used in multinational contexts or generally when they are their principal is not the home state.

complain of the lack of transparency. 'there is not a lot of transparency about these [private security] contracts, we don't know how they get recruits or what kind of training they get […] Unlike a government agency, the private companies are not required to tell the public exactly what they do, often citing business confidentiality' (Georgette Gagnon, deputy director of the Africa division of Human Rights Watch in Darfur quoted in Chatterjee 2004). The shared impression though is that the growing reliance on contractors does hamper the institutional mechanisms that usually trigger political discussion and control over armed operations.

The failure of institutional mechanisms that ought to trigger debates restricts the voices that are heard in the political discussion. One of the key functions of public debate about military involvement in conflicts is that this debate ensures that the various political alternatives and options are raised and debated. This is a concern not only for opposition policy-makers, lobbyists and NGO groups who resent the concentration of information and control at the level of the executive and the security administration. The military establishment – which relies heavily on institutional mechanisms to be heard – is also concerned about current developments. They worry about the 'unorthodox channels' through which policy makers get their information and the risk of being pulled into (a growing number of) overseas adventures (Cohen 2005).

The evolving dispositions and positions in the field of security accentuate the displacement of political debate away from the public realm. The expert status of private contractors and their increasing authority places narrow and technical discussions of conflicts at the centre. Contractors' professionalism is the main reason for this: they are trained to see the world as security professionals, to analyse security problems and suggest solutions. The competitive pressure of the markets where each firm has to sell its vision goes far in explaining the pressure these professionals are under to promote their particular version. The result is that the lack of institutional prompted debate is combined with a displacement of broader public debate by narrow, technically oriented discussions with focus is on the responsibility to effectively supply the security demanded and the assumptions is that markets are quasi markets are best suited for the task. Disappearing from view in the process are voices that advocate an alternative understandings of the conflict, suggest privileging other means than military ones and other strategies.

Darfur is a good illustration of this de-politicizing effect of contractor involvement. In the discussion about private contractors the focus on the technical security dimension linked to contractor involvement 'crowds out' discussions about the potential of alternative strategies

including for example a diplomacy based on oil (Prunier 2005)[11] or one based on building alliances with Arab chieftains who have opted for staying out of the war and who have been advocating peaceful settlements of conflicts, such as Baggara Rizeigat (Flint and de Waal 2005). Similarly, a narrow focus on the technical provision of security services overshadows the fundamental question about how highly security services should be prioritized. Even in Darfur this is a contentious question. Funds allocated to Darfur may used for a variety of purposes including private security services, support for the UNAMIS or the emergency aid on which 3 million people depend. Finally, the long term is marginal in the narrowly defined security focused on solving immediate problems. The issue of how to 'win the peace' disappears as does the impact private security providers have on the prospects of winning it. The likely costs of this neglect are shown by experience from other conflicts where private security firms become tools for a warfare-by-proxy between powerful states, companies and individuals (Musah 2002) and/or integrated in a social political economy based on a 'war system' (Nazih 2005[12]).

This de-politicization of security in turn itself becomes a reason for further expanding neo-liberal techniques of government in the security area. The conflict is framed in narrow terms where the key issue is the effective provision of security services and the main difficulty is finding someone willing to take responsibility for this provision. This dovetails with the neo-liberal emphasis on responsibilization and a hands-off approach to government. Private contractors can ensure that the services are efficiently provided and they offer to take responsibility. The emphasis on public inefficiencies including notably the lack of reaction by national states, NATO or the UN and the inadequacy of AU peacekeepers underscores that neo-liberal government techniques are not only a possible option but a better one. The narrowing framing makes public discussion appear superfluous at best. At worst, it is presented an immoral waste of time reflecting the petty concerns of outsiders who can afford to see people displaced and dying while they struggle to settle principled issues that are of concern only to themselves. The central neo-liberal concern with limiting government returns with vengeance.

[11] Oil continues to be a key bone of contention in the various peace talks. The rebels accuse the oil companies in the region of supporting the Khartoum government and Mohammed Targoni (of the MEJ) underlines that no firm should be working in the region until the hostility is ended (Harel 2004). This concerns in particular the petroleum group 'Cliveden', a partly Chinese owned firm with considerable investments in Chad and Soudan, and offices in the Virgin Islands, Geneva and Huston (Besson 2005).

[12] The role of war as a social system are elaborated also by Duffield (2001).

Ultimately then the role of private security contractors in Darfur becomes part of a more general spiral logic: neo-liberal governmentality paves the way for a provision of private security services. Neo-liberal governmentality techniques shift dispositions and positions in ways that weigh in the private contractors favour. The expanded role of private contractors then drives a further entrenchment of neo-liberal governmentality. By de-politicizing the conflict it justifies further reliance on neo-liberal techniques. A spiral of deepening neo-liberal governmentality is established. This spiralling process in Darfur is reinforcing neo-liberal governmentality in the field of security more generally. Lessons drawn and insights gained reflect back on discussions about security governance in other context. Darfur has become a point of reference for general discussions about security governance. It confirms the general virtues and potential of private security contracting and underlines the inadequacy of existing peacekeeping operations and the governance. Firms that prove their worth in one context are more likely to get contracts also in another. Hence to some extent the shifts in the dispositions and positions gained in the Darfur conflict are imported into other security fields. More generally, they are likely to weigh in the direction of further privatization of security and an increased reliance on neo-liberal governmentality techniques. The context within which the developments in Darfur should be see is that where the Davos World Economic Forum has launched a Global Governance Initiative (in 2003) and the UN has launched the Global Compact both of which are private actor based institutions purporting to play an active role in governing security and to create a greater place for the private sector in this.

Conclusion

This article has drawn attention to the specific processes, mechanisms and practices through which neo-liberal governmentality is reflected and reinforced by the by private contractors' role in Darfur. It took off from the question of how it is possible that private contractors can not only be present in military like roles in Darfur, but actually advertise this presence loudly and call for it to be further expanded. It suggested that the key for understanding this is the role of neo-liberal governmentality. Hence the article began by showing that that neo-liberal governmentality is increasingly present in the security sector generally as expressed by the centrality of privatization and of responsibilization. It then argued that the impact of these neo-liberal government techniques on dispositions and positions in the field of security systematically advantage private contractors. This is the context which makes sense of the role private contractors have in Darfur. We finally argued that this role in itself becomes part

of the processes entrenching neo-liberal governmentality in security more generally. Contractors gain symbolic and economic capital through their work in Darfur, this bolsters their authority to speak as security experts, further depoliticizing security questions, focussing on market based solutions.

In discussing the reflection and reinforcement of neo-liberal governmentality in the presence of private security contractors in Darfur, this article purposefully avoided discussing whether the changes described entail more or less state control or authority. The reason is that we wanted to focus on what privatization entailed for security practices and we are not sure that a focus on the state would have been helpful here. Instead we wanted to capture how privatization has altered the understanding of security, the content of security policies and the form of security governance; hence the insistence on de-politicization, responsibilization and the governance through quasi-markets where private public partnerships are central. We would contend that this overarching shift is pivotal since it will be reflected *also* in state policies. It would of course be interesting to take this discussion further and look into what actors (state and non-state) lose and gain from these development. It should be clear from the above that the answer certainly could not take a simple state versus private actor form. Rather, because the privatization discussed here is promoted by (some) state actors who certainly also benefit from them it is more likely that parts of 'states' (for example security professionals) would have benefited while others would have lost.

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