

# The Privatisation of Security and State Control of Force

Changes, Challenges and the Case of Iraq

av

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## Abstract

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The thematic focus of this dissertation is the privatisation of security, that is, the increasing use of private security companies (PSCs) to perform security- and military-related tasks traditionally associated with the state and institutions such as the police or the military. More concretely, the study investigates security privatisation in the context of violent conflict and in relation to the problem of state control of force. The point of departure is that the privatisation of security calls for a theoretical and historical reassessment of the ideal of a state monopoly of violence and of assumptions about the primacy of states vis-à-vis issues of security and conflict. Thus, it is argued that the level of state control of force is shifting across time and space and that the use of non-state forms of violence and protection is a recurrent theme in the history of state formation and change.

The aim of the dissertation is, firstly, to situate the post-Cold War expansion of the market for privatised security in a historical perspective and, secondly, to investigate empirically how security privatisation transpires in the conflict in Iraq and how this use of PSCs connects to changes and challenges to state control. Analysing issues of control from the perspective of civil-military relations, the study focuses on the functional, political and social dimensions of state control of force. Empirically, the study investigates the use of PSCs in Iraq from 2003-2007 and in particular how security privatisation is realised in terms of the production, financing and regulation of services. Adopting a descriptive and exploratory approach, the thesis draws on different sources, including official documents and a series of semi-structured interviews with people in the private security industry.

The study finds that the privatisation of security can fruitfully be seen as a re-emergence of non-state, commercial forms of violence and protection, in turn indicating a shift in state control over the instruments and use of force. This is in line with arguments about the increasing “marketization” of the state in the globalised period. However, the study also finds that there is no simple correlation between security privatisation and increasing or decreasing state control of force. Under some circumstances, privatisation has increased aspects of state control, but has also resulted in serious problems that challenge conventional thinking on the sovereign state and the ideal of state or democratic control of force. The case of Iraq provides several important insights into the logic and potential outcome of security privatisation in the context of armed conflict, but also points to a number of issues that merit further investigation, for instance concerning the oversight of PSCs and their activities in conflict and post-conflict environments and the difficulties of holding companies accountable.

**Keywords:** Peace and development research, privatisation of security, private security companies, civil-military relations, state control of force, state monopoly of violence, Iraq.