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ABSTRACT

The widespread use of private military and security companies (PMSCs) in United Nations peacebuilding missions often undermines the effectiveness of these missions. PMSCs tend to encourage, in unnecessary ways, what is called security risk management and promote the militarization of humanitarian efforts. They encourage humanitarian aid organizations to protect their personnel with barbed wire fences, security guards, armed convoys, and secure aid compounds, even if the security risks are relatively low. Consequently, these militarized humanitarian efforts heighten the perception of risks and intensify security measures, which create physical and psychological barriers between humanitarian aid personnel and the local communities in which they carry out their tasks. This situation undermines local ownership of peacebuilding efforts and makes them less responsive to the local communities involved in these efforts. This article provides a comparative analysis of the nature of this problem and its effects in the Global South.

Keywords: Humanitarianism, militarization, United States, peacebuilding, privatization, PMSCs

Introduction

The global market for private military and security companies (PMSCs) has expanded dramatically since the end of the Cold War (del Prado, 2011, p. 151).[1] These companies gained prominence during the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where companies like Blackwater became a topic of much controversy (see, for example, BBC News 2008,

Broder & Knowlton, 2020). PMSCs offer services that traditionally belong to the domain of state militaries (Singer, 2008, p. 73). Such services include military training, security advice, and logistics management (Kinsey, 2006, p. 95; Singer, 2008, p. 73). Notably, the US Congressional Research Service (2009) confirms that "[I]n Iraq and Afghanistan, armed and unarmed private security contractors have been employed to provide services such as protecting fixed locations; guarding traveling convoys; providing security escorts; and training police and military personnel." As Adam Moore (2019, p. 4) notes, the growth of US military contracting is significant not only because it constitutes a fundamental change in the conduct of global wars but also because of its scale and scope. Whereas the ratio of contractors to the armed forces was approximately 1:7 during World War II, the US presence in Iraq and Afghanistan constituted almost 50% of private security contractors (US Congressional Research Service, 2009, p. 1).

As the activities of PMSCs came under scrutiny, some firms invested efforts in presenting themselves as legitimate suppliers of military services (Phelps, 2014, p. 832). Various critics, however, argue that PMSCs' activities are essentially illegal mercenarism, particularly in their direct engagement with violent conflicts (del Prado, 2011, p. 158; Kinsey, 2006, p. 78). To avoid such negative associations, PMSCs highlight their contributions to humanitarianism through the provision of peace and stability in conflict-ridden territories (Joachim & Schneiker, 2012). Their clients, meanwhile, also contribute to the normalization of military outsourcing. The US government permits the use of force by private companies, have protected PMSCs from prosecution in legal jurisdiction in which they were deployed, and considers PMSCs as legitimate actors, particularly in public discourses (Krahmann, 2013, p. 60). Furthermore, the various efforts by the United Nations, several states, and other stakeholders to regulate the industry after multiple scandals have implied that PSMCs *can* be legitimate.[2] Hence, PMSCs have strategically positioned themselves as legitimate and indispensable suppliers of security services on the global stage. The reliance by some governments on private security services has apparently grown to the extent that countries like the US "can no longer go to war without the private sector," according to former military contractor Sean McFate (2016, par. 8).

While military contracting by the USA and other countries has received considerable attention, further research is needed concerning

the use of PSMCs by the United Nations, NGOs, and corporations involved in peacebuilding missions. Recently, the United Nations openly acknowledged its use of PMSCs, and, unfortunately, quite few studies have engaged with the topic (see, for example, Kinsey, 2006; Krahmann, 2016; Krahmann & Leander, 2019; Østensen, 2013). In such missions, PMSCs are contracted to protect the personnel and installations of peacebuilding organizations, especially where public forces are either lacking or seen as incompetent (Krahmann & Leander, 2019, p. 171; Østensen, 2013, p. 33). They also train peacekeeping forces and provide consultancy on security procedures and risk assessment (Østensen, 2013, pp. 36–37).

Therefore, this article focuses on the following puzzle: Does the widespread use of PMSCs in UN peacebuilding undermine the effectiveness of peacebuilding missions? If so, how? Our core argument states that PMSCs tend to reinforce, albeit in unnecessary ways, security risk management through the promotion of intensified militarization in supposedly humanitarian spaces. Their presence encourages humanitarian organizations to protect their personnel with barbed wired fences, security guards, protected convoys, and secure aid compounds, even if security risks are relatively low. Consequently, those tactics promote a heightened threat perception in local communities, as they harden the physical and psychological barriers between humanitarian personnel and local communities. That situation prevents the social integration of foreign interveners with the local community and undermines the supposed local ownership of the peacebuilding processes, thereby making peace programs less responsive to the local context. Before presenting our analysis that builds those arguments, we provide a critical review of the literature on the consequences of security privatization and conceptualize the conditions for effective peacebuilding. Our article contributes to important policy and scholarly debates in international peacebuilding and global security studies. First, we underscore some of the detrimental consequences of security privatization in international humanitarian programs. Second, we illustrate how PMSCs strategically deploy security-oriented discourses in ways that frame their services as indispensable to humanitarian operations, thereby consolidating their commercial position by securing more contracts for their services. Third, we demonstrate how the privatization of security services in humanitarian spaces undermines peacebuilding through a systematic disregard of the local needs and aspirations.

Existing State of Knowledge on Security Privatization

The literature on the involvement of PMSCs in peacebuilding missions is currently quite limited. Key contestations in the more general academic debate on the consequences of security privatization are useful to contextualize the arguments in this research. We identify two distinctive strands of literature. The first strand posits that PMSCs are essentially a policy tool of their clients to address security issues. It regards the effects of security privatization as mostly positive since the free market can provide additional options to improve (global) security. The second strand of literature argues that PMSCs wield influence over the design and implementation of security strategies and tactics. This influence of PMSCs over their clients often undermines non-militarized approaches that may be more effective and legitimate than militarized approaches.

The first strand of the literature focuses on the positive role of PMSCs. Phelps (2014, pp. 837–838) argues that PMSCs can be a legitimate alternative policy tool for governments. Malešević (2018, p. 53) contends that PMSCs are often culturally and organizationally similar to national armies since most of their personnel are often recruited from the state's military forces. Bures (2005, p. 542) and Baker and Pattison (2012, p. 6) argue that PMSCs can be an attractive alternative option to conduct humanitarian interventions, especially if regular forces are lacking or unwilling to act. Baker and Pattison suggest that it may be more economical to use PMSCs, because "the costs of an intervention by a PMSC can be more easily spread amongst states" (2012, p. 8). They recognize, however, that concerns about the legal accountability and transparency of their activities may prevent them from being contracted.

Cockayne (2008) and Gasser and Malzacher (2019, 68) argue that regulation initiatives have had a positive impact on PMSCs' ability to contribute to security. Furthermore, the large majority of the PMSC industry is currently involved in non-lethal military tasks such as training, consultation, and other support functions. Gasser and Malzacher (2019, p. 53) and Kinsey (2006, 101) presume the practice of these "non-core" military tasks to be less contentious.

The second strand of literature criticizes the influence PMSCs exercise over the policies and practices of their clients (Østensen, 2013). The distinction between "core" and "non-core" military tasks is misleading. Leander (2005a, 808) argues that while PMSCs are often interconnected with national armies, they remain a private industry

driven by pecuniary incentives. Their involvement in threat evaluation, consultancy and training gives PMSCs "epistemic power" to shape the views and discourses on certain issues; specifically, they frame problems and encourage solutions, which make the PMSCs appear indispensable (Leander, 2005a, p. 824). This may undermine non-militarized solutions to perceived security risks (Leander, 2005a, p. 824). They also can make it appear there is a continuing need for private security (Krahmann & Leander, 2019, p. 177). PMSCs tend to focus on mitigating threats, and the success of these preventive efforts is often hard for their clients to assess (Krahmann, 2008, p. 393). Since the root causes of the threats tend to remain unaddressed by these preventive security measures, they can create the image of a continuing hostile environment (Krahmann, 2011, p. 368). Furthermore, Avant (2004, p. 156) argues that a multiplicity of security actors can generate insecurity if the PMSCs are improperly monitored. Mandel (2002, p. 74) adds to this that private security can weaken the PMSC clients' sense of responsibility.

The second strand of literature points out some important consequences of using PMSCs that are neglected in the first strand of the literature. By viewing private security as largely similar to public security services, the PMSCs' influence over their clients is often ignored. PMSCs may effectively provide short-term solutions, but they seem less capable of improving overall security in the long-term, which is one of the core goals of peacebuilding.

Bures (2005) on the other hand argues that tragedies such as the genocides in Rwanda (1994) and Darfur (2004) might have been avoided by using PMSCs (Bures, 2005). In a similar vein, Brooks (2000) and Spearin (2001, p. 39) emphasize the PMSCs' potential to contribute to peace and stability. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan also has argued that "in the face of mass murder [using private security forces] is an option that cannot be relinquished" (as quoted in Shearer, 2001). But Brayton (2002, p. 328) has argued that for PMSCs "peacekeeping in any meaningful sense is simply not profitable."

While the merits of using PMSCs in humanitarian contexts are debatable, recent studies have been based on more empirical evidence. Krahmann and Leander (2019, p. 167) have observed that security contracting by MONUSCO (the UN mission in Congo) has led to the expanded militarization of the mission's security measures. Krahmann (2016) has observed the same dynamics in Afghanistan. Østensen (2013, pp. 40–41) furthermore notes that PMSCs tend to prescribe "harder" and

more proactive security measures than favored by the United Nations, which tries to maintain impartiality.

While the involvement of PMSCs in peacebuilding has been linked to the expansion and hardening of security measures locally, a causal explanation is lacking as to how this impacts peacebuilding effectiveness at large: How exactly do harder security measures on the ground impact the achievability of the political goals of peacebuilding? Why do PMSCs exert more influence on security management than other actors? This study will consider the determinants of peacebuilding effectiveness and explain which aspects are most affected if PMSCs become widely involved. It also considers how PMSCs can have more influence on security policies than other actors.

Theory and Arguments

We argue that PMSCs tend to claim special authority to organize security risk management and disempower alternative political and non-militaristic efforts to address security risks. Their claim to authority tends to be accepted by most peacekeeping personnel. To assess when peacebuilding is effective, we need to establish what peacebuilding missions aim to achieve. Since UN peace operations take place in broadly varying sociopolitical environments, we disregard the specifics of individual missions. Instead, we consider here the goals that peace missions are expected to achieve. Peace, nonetheless, is often construed as the absence of violence (Galtung, 1969, p. 167). If this occurs on a structural level ("positive peace"), broad socio-economic conditions work to reduce structural levels of violence such as the existence of social justice (Galtung, 1969, p. 183). The promotion of positive peace is therefore intimately connected with social development (Galtung, 1969, p. 183). Peace, however, is not a neutral term. Peace is indeed the subject of contentious political discourses and tends to be deployed to mobilize resources for particular political purposes (Regilme, 2020, p. 1). As Duffield (2014, p. 4) notes that liberal peace promotion is often aimed at social, economic, and political transformation to reduce violent conflict and prevent its recurrence. In peacebuilding "development is ultimately impossible without stability and, at the same time, security is not sustainable without development" (Duffield, 2014, p. 16). Peacebuilding effectiveness, in this sense, revolves around the question how security and development can become mutually reinforcing.

The recent peacebuilding literature has criticized traditional top-down approaches to peacebuilding which tend to neglect crucial social dynamics, local context, and the needs and practices of non-elite citizens (Chandler, 2017, p. 154). Local communities therefore frequently adapt, evade, or even resist the programs designed to help them (Autesserre, 2014, p. 107). Several scholars, therefore, argue that a serious consideration of micro-level, everyday dynamics are essential in effective peacebuilding (Autesserre, 2014, p. 12; Chandler, 2017, p. 178; Paris, 2011; Richmond, 2011). Sabaratnam (2017, p. 38) adds to this that academic research on interventions tends to be hampered by Eurocentric ways of thinking about the host countries. This systematically excludes many relevant actors from analyses of peacebuilding (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 50). Hence, the theoretical model used here focuses on micro-level dynamics.

There are three key considerations in assessing the relationship between local communities and foreign interveners (through the US military–industrial complex) in peacebuilding processes. These three processes, facilitated by PMSCs, are underpinned by US government's longstanding reliance on a militarization paradigm, particularly in its relationship with the Global South. Militarization as a paradigm of global governance pertains to the dominance of war ideals and organized violence as the ordering logics of social, economic, and political aspects of a given community. As Lutz (2018, p. 1) notes, militarization pertains to the "intensification of the land, labor, and material resources allocated to military purposes as well as the shaping of other institutions and cultural ideas and values in line with military goals". This paradigm underpins the core identity of the contemporary global order, including the United States as the world's dominant state actor. As Gonzalez and Gusterson (2019, p. 6) notes that the "United States today accounts for nearly 40 percent of the world's military expenditures every year … and … the most studied and leading model of what might be called a militarized society". Yet, that militarization is not merely confined within United States territory. Rather, in a post-9/11 context, the United States—especially its own military–industrial complex—has projected its interests in many parts of the globe, particularly in ways that such war ideals and militaristic outlook gained traction (Gonzalez & Gusterson, 2019, p. 5; Regilme, 2018a, 2018b, 2021, pp. 71–104, 172–216).

First, we are concerned if the security practices of PMSCs are likely to contribute to public safety and stability to enable the implementation of development projects. Effective peacebuilding requires that security

actors pave the way for development and development provides the conditions for lasting peace. However, this also presents a potential contradiction. Military and security actors are supposed to support what is essentially a civilian operation. The use of militaristic security risk management, which refers here to the war-driven policies (instead of socioeconomic) that are used to mitigate or eliminate perceived security risks, can unnecessarily inflate threat perceptions among both interveners and local communities (Autesserre, 2014, p. 223). Local citizens are likely to feel unsafe and become more vigilant (Mandel, 2002, p. 75). At the same time, interveners who see one organization expand its security measures are more likely to do the same (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 532). This can set off a self-perpetuating cycle of increased militarization. Thus, it is important to apply measured security risk management that matches with the actual threat levels of the local environment (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 525). We contend that PMSCs assess threats in a way that allows them to sell more security services. PMSCs are therefore unlikely to deliver context-specific security measures and contribute to the militarization of humanitarian spaces, even in areas that are relatively safe. This undermines peacebuilding effectiveness.

Second, the militaristic practices of PMSCs create physical and psychological barriers between local communities and aid workers, which complicate promoting local ownership. Indeed, local ownership in the peacebuilding constitutes a crucial component of socio-economic development. Foreign interveners are essentially faced with two competing imperatives. On one hand, creating the conditions for lasting peace through programs that transform societies requires a "heavy footprint" of intervention (Paris, 2011, p. 36). Meanwhile, it is necessary to limit the level of intrusion in domestic affairs as this is likely to generate local resistance against foreign intervention (Paris, 2011, p. 36). Thus, effective peacebuilding requires a balance between the two, through the promotion of *local ownership*: Is the peace mission likely to engender a sense of agency and authorship within local communities regarding peacebuilding programs? Adequate security practices are essential to bridge the gap between interveners and local communities. Some degree of security is necessary to operate peace programs in areas of ongoing armed conflict. Yet, an abundance of security measures can increase barriers between aid recipients and the organizations that intend to help them (Autesserre, 2014, p. 223). We argue that PMSCs have an innate

tendency to encourage the use of intensified security measures like the "bunkerization" of aid. Bunkerization refers here to the use of security measures such as barbed wire fences, security guards, and walls to protect aid compounds, which make it resemble a military bunker (Krahmann & Leander, 2019, p. 176; Pingeot, 2012, p. 38; Weigang & Andersson, 2019, p. 505).

Third, PMSCs' disregard for local knowledge can cause interveners to fail to understand the underlying causes of violence in each situation (Autesserre, 2014, p. 116). Sabaratnam (2017, p. 141) has argued that such disregard is also reflective of a Eurocentric (or colonial) logic in thinking by interveners, where the perspectives of local actors are not taken seriously. This can alienate local populations from the peace mission, undermine local ownership, and make development programs less responsive to local needs. Since militaristic security practices have the potential to create barriers between interveners and local communities, they can disrupt the development of in-depth (and informal) relations between interveners and locals. This can decrease the quality of local knowledge interveners can gather (Autesserre, 2014, p. 229). The security measures of PMSCs disrupt routine and organic social interactions between interveners and local communities and cause foreign interveners to interact mostly with one another. This reduces interveners' ability to incorporate local knowledge in development programs and to engage meaningfully with the most vulnerable communities, thereby subverting peacebuilding effectiveness.

Considering that security risk management constitutes a fundamental aspect of today's peace missions, PMSCs exercise a high degree of control over the way peace programs are implemented. Securitization approach is often used to analyze speech acts by particular individuals who discursively establish that a certain issue constitutes an existential threat and therefore legitimizes the use of extraordinary measures (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 491; Stritzel, 2007, p. 360). While securitization approach has also moved beyond actor-centric approaches focused on speech acts, we use instead a structure-centric approach (Stritzel, 2007, p. 359). As such, securitization revolves not so much around the act of defining something as an existential threat as it is about defining who becomes empowered and disempowered in a particular context (Balzacq et al., 2015, p. 495).

To this end securitization theorists use the concept of *facilitating conditions*, which denotes that securitization is embedded in (a) an

existing discourse, from which security articulations partly derive their meaning and (b) the social standing (i.e., the power position) of the actors and their ability to influence the existing discursive context (Stritzel, 2007, p. 370). A particular narrative is likely to gain traction given two conditions: (a) the compatibility or linkage of the security articulation with the existing discourse and (b) the structural position of the securitizing actor to promote preferred discourses (Stritzel, 2007, p. 370). As such, by maximizing the structural advantages facilitated by dominant post-9/11 militaristic paradigm that espouse war ideals as key modalities of social relations, PMSCs have benefitted from the condition that peacebuilders face a new, threatening security environment. Capitalizing on the post-9/11 discursive environment that privileges militarism as the solution for the perceived problem of global terrorism, PMSCs aggressively offer their services to fulfill the increased demand by states and non-state entities, thereby entrenching further profit-making the key political logic in global peacebuilding operations. In doing so, PMSCs seek to consolidate their position as dominant political actors in peacebuilding missions.

PMSCs and Peacebuilding Effectiveness

An effective peacebuilding mission depends on a meaningful and cooperative relationship between local civilians and foreign interveners. Inadequate security measures leave interveners exposed to security threats. Too many security measures, in contrast, unnecessarily militarize humanitarian spaces, creating a hostile environment and distrust around civilian development programs. Autesserre (2014) underscores the two basic forms of security risk management in peacebuilding missions. One approach is centered on the "acceptance" of local stakeholders and reliance on their support. This involves developing good relations with local power brokers and assimilating into local populations to not stand out as a target for attacks (Autesserre, 2014, p. 219). The other approach is to isolate interveners as much as possible from potential threats to mitigate security risks (Autesserre, 2014, p. 219). Interveners live in compounds protected by high and thick walls, barbed wire, and security guards (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 524). It can also include informing the headquarters of staff movements, driving doors locked and windows closed, and maintaining strict curfews (Autesserre, 2014, p. 217). This approach is commonly known in the literature as the "bunkerization" of peace missions.

Bunkerization practices militarize the civilian sphere, which is likely to undermine public safety and peacebuilding effectiveness. It is therefore important that security policies are context-specific and limit bunkerization practices as much as the local environment allows. Second, a growing global market for private security draws resources away from endeavors that promote local public security and instead improves the safety only of those who can afford it. For both reasons, the involvement of PMSCs in peacebuilding tends to reduce local public security and thereby undermines the effectiveness of the mission, while potentially bolstering the interests of the US military–industrial complex that includes PMSCs.

Towards the end of the 1990s, peacebuilding missions became more ambitious and have increasingly taken place in an environment of ongoing conflict or where peace is inconclusive and highly contested (Duffield, 2014, p. 58). The United Nations negotiates access for humanitarian agencies to reach into ungoverned areas and to work in contested territories (Duffield, 2014, p. 79). While this allows aid to reach more people in need, involvement in ongoing conflicts both increases security risks for interveners and has made it more difficult to sustain an image of neutrality and impartiality. Some organizations even began to argue that neutrality was impossible in such circumstances, because any assistance necessarily has political dimensions (Duffield, 2014, p. 75). Consequently, security management gained traction, which brought UN agencies, NGOs, and international corporations highly engaged in development projects together with military organizations and private security agencies.

Mark Duffield (2014, p. 16) calls these expansive networks of cooperation "strategic complexes". The purpose of strategic complexes is to tie security actors close to humanitarian organizations to allow development projects to be operated even in those areas where negative peace is absent. As areas of deployment became increasingly dangerous, this raised expectations about security procedures (Autesserre, 2014, p. 220). The ability to protect one's field-based staff also became a criterion to assess organizations' professional standing. In effect, a more conservative approach to risk management emerged, whereby risk aversion became so strong that security officers often preferred to reduce risks even at the expense of operational effectiveness (Autesserre, 2014, p. 221). The bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad in 2003 presented a watershed moment for security management in UN peace missions

(Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 521; Pingeot, 2012, p. 23). Among others, this led to the establishment of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (DSS) in 2005, that was created to professionalize and standardize security procedures (Pingeot, 2012, p. 23).

Such developments have increased the influence of security actors in peacebuilding missions. As Duffield (2010) notes, "headquarters oversight was strengthened and … standardized security protocols were rolled out through what was now a global network of security officers" (p. 459). Standardized security training is now mandatory for UN staff and all other interveners who want to gain access to UN compounds (Duffield, 2010). While some form of bunkerization is often necessary, the problem is that threat perceptions tend to be inflated in most peace missions (Autesserre, 2014, p. 223). Interveners overestimate security risks, in part because the security training conveys a message that interveners face pervasive threats; to encourage behavioral change, the training purposefully strips out any doubts and exceptions (Duffield, 2010, p. 460). Formal meetings also often center on sharing security information, "making it impossible for international peacebuilders to forget the risks they face" (Autesserre, 2014, p. 225). This normalizes and encourages defensive living, as demonstrated by the high walls, barbed wire, armored gates, and guards in the peacebuilders' residence communities.

Even organizations that do not arm their guards almost always "wall themselves up" (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 524). These bunkerization practices raise the profile of development organizations and militarize humanitarian spaces, which creates a greater general sense of insecurity (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 532). Both the employees of international organizations and the local population will feel more threatened as a result of widespread distancing security measures. Andersson and Weigand (2015, p. 533) note that visible security measures ironically often create a perception of constant insecurity. Especially in areas with relatively low security risks, bunkerization creates unnecessary negative security dynamics for aid organizations.

On the other hand, as one UN official complains, "security measures … frequently end up attracting a high level of unwanted attention" (Weigand & Andersson, 2019, p. 509). It is therefore crucial to minimize bunkerization practices as much as the local environment allows to maintain a safe environment for development projects. Doctors Without Borders, for example, has successfully used the acceptance approach, relying on the public to guarantee its safety (Pingeot, 2012, p. 37).

This has allowed the organization to reach into areas where the United Nations could not (Pingeot, 2012). Their approach is arguably not feasible for every organization in all areas, but it presents a good example where context-specific security management increases the effectiveness of peace development.

When PMSCs become involved in peacebuilding, they can deliver a broad range of tasks. Some have noted that with the establishment of the DSS in 2005 and the prioritization of security management, security contracting has dramatically increased (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 521; Pingeot, 2012). However, it is difficult to get a full picture of the magnitude of outsourcing practices since the United Nations does not always list the names of contracted companies. When PMSCs are hired for security advice, contracts are often classified simply as "consultancy" (Pingeot, 2012, p. 25).

Nevertheless, their involvement in almost all different security tasks, from security management to implementing those policies, arguably gives PMSCs much influence over security practices. They do not only provide security but also increasingly manage many parts of the operation (Østensen, 2014, p. 424). This does not mean that they are explicitly granted decision-making power; rather, they exercise expert authority to influence understandings of how missions are best planned and carried out (Østensen, 2014, p. 426). This can make them indispensable in the planning and execution of peace operations and an integral component of strategic complexes (Duffield, 2014, p. 16; Østensen, 2014, p. 424). To measure the impact of PMSCs without an exact overview of their involvement, it is useful to assess their ability to implement context-specific security management by focusing on the characteristics of private security services.

PMSCs have a commercial interest in selling security equipment and services to their clients (Østensen, 2013, p. 35). That same commercial relationship incentivizes them to focus their efforts on protecting the client, more than trying to grasp the societal and political dynamics of their environment (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 526). They tend to provide security through distance by physically separating their clients from potential threats with measures such as walls and fences and the use of security guards. They do so because that approach promotes the use of their own defensive services (Pingeot, 2012, p. 13).

Separation tactics also make risk management much easier; to deliver good performance on a contract, security advisors have little incentive to enable free movement (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 526).

Furthermore, private firms calculate risk not in terms of the likelihood that something could occur (as public agencies would do) but in terms of the probable impact a threat would have on the target (Krahmann, 2011, p. 364). Thus, even though the collective risk of terrorism is negligible, PSMCs can still present it as a high personal risk to their customers based on their activities and their lack of individual protection (Krahmann, 2011, p. 365). In addition, PSMCs tend to persuade their clients to address *any* possible exposure to threats. They focus on risk minimization, while recognizing that "zero risk" does not exist (Krahmann, 2011, p. 365). In other words, private firms identify a much wider range of risks and inflate risk perceptions even if the threat levels of their local environment could be relatively low.

This technical approach to security can especially be problematic in the context of peacebuilding. While it may be sensible to an individual organization to hire private protection, widespread security privatization can create an atmosphere of fear among the public (Mandel, 2002, p. 74). An expansion of visible security measures suggests a strong perception of a hostile environment, regardless of the actual threat level; as such, security privatization can become self-reinforcing, and it increases the demand from those who can afford it.

Private security is different from security delivered by public forces. The security public forces deliver is (in its ideal form) a collective good: No one can be excluded from using it and if one person or group benefits from it, this does not mean that others cannot (Krahmann, 2008, p. 384). Private security, however, tends to be exclusionary and geared towards paying customers because there is little commercial incentive to produce collective goods (Krahmann, 2008). It should be noted, nonetheless, that better public security services do not always provide equal protection for everyone simply because this is what the law dictates. It is unfortunately common for security forces to avoid unstable or financially impoverished areas (Mandel, 2002, p. 78). Yet, the distinction is useful here to understand the operational logic of PMSCs and their probable impact on local public security.

A growing local market for PMSCs generates detrimental effects on the local security environment. First, to the extent that security becomes a function of disposable income, economic inequality becomes translated into security inequality (Mandel, 2002, p. 77). This makes material inequality more visible and may cause resentment against interveners (Krahmann & Leander, 2019, p. 177). Second, private security is more

focused on mitigating the consequences of threats than tackling their root causes. Customers are unlikely to fund preventive efforts because their success is harder to measure (Krahmann, 2008, p. 393). Private security thus tends to be short-term focused and defensive in nature, particularly through its devotion in the fulfillment of customers' immediate security needs, while leaving collective security problems to public forces and development agencies. An expanding private security market can, however, increasingly drive resources away from collective sociopolitical efforts that promote positive peace (Krahmann & Leander, 2019, p. 180).

Furthermore, PMSCs can draw personnel away from public forces if they offer better salaries. This is especially pertinent to highly skilled personnel, which tends to earn "anywhere from 2 to 10 times as much as in the official military and police" (Singer, 2008, p. 74). This can weaken local government forces, which makes them less capable of creating a safe environment for development programs (Leander, 2005b, p. 616). When the market for private security expands in peacebuilding missions, fewer resources and weak political commitment will be devoted to local public security. This is likely to create a more unstable environment for socio-economic development, which undermines peace building effectiveness.

Local Communities' Ownership of the Peacebuilding Process

Due to the disappointing results of some peace missions up to the mid-1990s, the United Nations began to strive for a more comprehensive approach to achieve sustainable solutions to violent conflict. As Paris (2011) notes, the United Nations aspired not to leave until post-war political and economic reforms were consolidated (p. 35). This emphasis on capacity-building and institutional reform became known as "statebuilding". However, some observers criticized that statebuilding was too intrusive, because it subverted genuine political participation and locally driven reforms (Paris, 2011, p. 36). This critique contributed to a growing belief among academics and interveners that the promotion of local ownership is essential to make missions more effective. Autesserre (2014) provides a clear example of what can happen if local communities are not engaged in the process, as has been the case during MONUSCO (the UN mission in Congo):

> [G]rassroots populations view water supply points built by most international NGOs, such as Oxfam, as the property of these NGOs instead of as new assets

for their communities. Their reasoning is simple: Because the NGO never consulted intended beneficiaries on important issues such as where the supply point should be located, the project is not theirs; they have no stake in it. As a result, the stations fall apart quickly after international interveners leave.

It has become clear that the engagement of local civilians matters for effective peace development. However, the promotion of local ownership is difficult to achieve through interventions that are primarily concerned with macro-level bureaucratic reforms and economic programs (Chandler, 2017, p. 154). As Autesserre (2014) explains, "[V]irtually no local people will ever read the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission deployed in their village or the country strategy of the [NGO] helping their families" (p. 28). Local communities experience peace missions by their daily impressions of interveners on the ground and the quality of the services they deliver (Autesserre, 2014, 29). The ability to engage local communities is dependent on the degree in which development programs promote the political agency of local actors and communities (Chandler, 2017, p. 158). A lack of ownership decreases incentives for local populations to perpetuate international programs and may even generate resistance to them (Autesserre, 2014, p. 107). Therefore, peacebuilding should be primarily focused on working upon the capacities, political processes, and social practices that are already present in a region (Chandler, 2017, p. 166). Development programs thereby become internalized by local communities, rather than seen as externally driven projects (Chandler, 2017, p. 186).

Sabaratnam (2017, p. 141) argues that integral to efforts to reduce barriers between locals and interveners should be the notion that local populations matter equally in the peacebuilding process. Where locals are (or feel) politically subordinated to foreign interveners, this can be reminiscent of colonialism and cause resentment (Sabaratnam, 2017). When interveners deliver the resources as local leaders often have little choice but to accept that, asymmetrical power relations are likely to emerge. Aid recipients tend to find themselves in a poor bargaining position to determine how resources are spent and what policies are implemented (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 76).

Apart from psychological gaps, power disparities manifest in material forms. Differences in material wealth between interveners and local communities have always remained blatant, considering that foreign interveners often come from the Global North. Interveners, however,

should attempt to mitigate these differences, as they can represent a visible separation between the privileged and the subordinated (Chandler, 2017, p. 134). One way to avoid that feeling of separation is to minimize the militarization of humanitarian spaces, which consequently, could encourage more meaningful social interactions between interveners and local communities.

Since PMSCs tend to commodify security, a local increase in security privatization means that security increasingly becomes a privilege to those who can afford it (Krahmann & Leander, 2019, p. 176; Mandel, 2002, p. 77). While this may create resentment among local communities and increase tensions in humanitarian space, it also makes disparities in material wealth more visible (Mandel, 2002, p. 77). PMSCs tend to promote the extensive use of visible security measures and to physically separate their clients from potential threats. These bunkerization practices present a visual image of distrust to the outside world and signal to local communities that an organization is primarily concerned with protecting its own staff (Krahmann & Leander, 2014, p. 173–77). Such gaps in security coverage can become a visible representation of inequalities in political power: It signals that interveners matter more than local communities. These dynamics also appeared in UNAMA, the UN mission in Afghanistan.

Andersson and Weigand (2015) describe how risk perceptions dramatically increased since 2008, following a number of attacks on aid workers (p. 523). International organizations began to hire security managers to improve the protection of aid workers. However, these experts did "not have the training or experience to analyse the context specific risks in a detailed way, to communicate these risks appropriately and to treat civilian staff in a civilian way. They focus on what they know: security through distance" (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 526). This quickly turned Afghanistan's capital Kabul into a place where interveners and Afghan society became systematically separated. The phenomenon became known among intervenes as the "Kabubble"—a network wherein "first world comforts are recreated behind high walls" (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 524).

According to Duffield (2010, p. 457), this is not a unique example. Even in countries that are relatively safe, highly securitized aid compounds on different locations are linked through transport routes that are exclusively available to interveners, creating an integrated aid network. There is more than one cause of this problem, but the distinctive way in which PMSCs

approach security risk management increases rather than mitigates physical barriers between interveners and locals. The widespread use of PMSCs is therefore likely to make interveners stand out as a privileged community of foreigners.

While such visible differences can complicate the promotion of local ownership of the peacebuilding process, these barriers also have a significant psychological component. First, the use of hard security measures can intimidate local stakeholders and make them feel unwelcome. As Autesserre (2014) explains:

> The high walls, security guards, and other barricades that surround expatri- ate residences make interveners seem remote and difficult to access … one has to verify one's identity, contact one's host, wait for an escort to his or her office, and in the most protected places undergo a thorough search of one's belongings, plus pass through a series of checkpoints. (p. 226)

The security measures of PSMCs make it difficult for many local actors to cooperate closely with interveners. This is especially the case in areas of heightened insecurity, such as in Afghanistan, where "remote management" has emerged (Duffield, 2010, p. 470). International aid workers manage projects from a distance through email or by phone and rely on local staff in the field for the implementation of development programs (Duffield, 2010, p. 470). A second consequence, related to the first, is that these working practices do not only create barriers between interveners and the intended beneficiaries of aid but also create unequal power relations within development projects.

The more international organizations distance their staff from local communities, the more they will need to outsource field tasks to local actors (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 532). In effect, the local staff often resents the "much better-paid, fully insured yet risk-averse foreigners who manage them" (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 535). Faced with such physical and psychological barriers, local communities are more likely to feel subordinated and peripheral in the peacebuilding process, thereby undermining the long-term prospects of attaining peace.

Peacebuilders and the Local Context

The implementation of a liberal political agenda, including the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the free market, remains an important

aspect of peacebuilding. Yet, sensitivity for the local political context is vital for effective peace missions. For development programs to promote positive peace, interveners should customize programs to the local political context. As Richmond (2011, p. 228) argues, "Moving beyond liberal peacebuilding does not mean the end of the liberal peace but enabling its reconnection with its subjects in widely divergent contexts". While institutional reform can support peacebuilding, the success of statebuilding efforts depends on the degree in which state institutions are perceived to represent the interests of citizens (Chandler, 2017, p. 186).

Indeed, micro-level dynamics and daily interactions between interveners and local communities provide a good scope of analysis for peacebuilding effectiveness. At this level, differences between the aspirations of interveners and the applicability of development programs are worth analyzing. Autesserre (2014, p. 69) views this friction as a dispute about which type of knowledge matters in the design of peace programs: local knowledge, which refers to expertise about the country or the local environment, and technical knowledge (or thematic expertise), which involves an in-depth understanding of particular aspects of peacebuilding, such as conflict-resolution, or humanitarian aid. She argues that peacebuilding missions tend to be ineffective if they overly rely on technical knowledge while disregarding local input, as this "undermines the authority of local people to frame and solve their own problems" (Autesserre, 2014, p. 107). It can also lead to inaccurate understandings of the causes of violence. Sabaratnam (2017) remarks that the lack of inclusion of local perspectives is indicative of a Eurocentric or colonial logic in thinking among interveners. It suggests that local actors are treated as "mute objects or data points rather than serious interlocutors with an alternative standpoint or traditions of knowledge" (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 17). Such hierarchies are problematic not only because they are unfair but also because they can lead to major shortcomings in development programs: Those who have privileges are less likely to be aware of them, while disadvantaged groups have a better vantage point from which to analyze social order (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 49). Local actors can have significant advantages in observing where development programs are lacking, or why they fail to engage local communities (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 50). The security operations of PMSCs systematically disrupt routine interactions between interveners and local communities and cause interveners to interact mostly with one another. The disengagement of local actors reduces interveners' ability

to incorporate local knowledge into development programs. This reduces the adaptiveness of development programs.

Development programs are more likely to adapt effectively to the local political context if local actors, especially those who possess a rich knowledge of the local environment, are able to frequently interact with interveners. This allows for routine information sharing and engages local communities in the peacebuilding process, particularly within a decentralized mode of peacebuilding operations. Autesserre (2014, p. 117) notes that those actors working in leadership positions at the headquarters of peace missions (which are usually located in the capital of the host country) often develop a good macro-level understanding of the sociopolitical environment. Those actors, however, are quite rarely informed about micro-level developments outside the capital cities (Autesserre, 2014, p. 117). Their emphasis on macro-level factors and events in metropolitan areas is problematic because "many civil wars are predominantly fought in rural places, which are very distinct from urban ones" (Autesserre, 2014, p. 122). The lack of understanding of local contexts causes interveners to rely on simplified narratives that emphasize specific issues on which to focus. This can falsely give interveners the impression that they have a grasp of the most important issues (Autesserre, 2014, p. 131).

The widespread presence of PMSCs is likely to undermine the incorporation of local knowledge into development programs for several reasons. First, hard security measures can transform everyday dynamics between aid workers and recipients. They constrain interveners in how they operate and engage with local society while "seeing their own mobility and control over every day working and living conditions drastically reduced" (Weigand & Andersson, 2019, p. 505). This reduces the operational reach of peace missions. Stringent security procedures can prevent trips to remote areas and dangerous places or permit them only with armed military escorts that may frighten local citizens (Weigand & Andersson, 2019, p. 229). This "curtail[s] international peacebuilders' knowledge of local conditions in areas most in need of their work" (Weigand & Andersson, 2019, p. 229). The political interests of these parts of society are subsequently frequently ignored. This can (unintentionally) produce a hierarchy of knowledge and excludes alternative insights regarding intervention (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 44). This also affects interveners who challenge the use of hard security measures. If security privatization becomes widespread and strict security procedures become

unavoidable, it can especially demoralize those who are aware of the need to engage with local communities (Weigand & Andersson, 2019, p. 505).

In Afghanistan, Weigand and Andersson (2019, p. 505) found that security officers controlled virtually all aspects of the lives of aid workers, who subsequently feel "locked up", "being treated as kids", and lose a sense of self-control over their work. One aid worker complained:

> Honestly, it's rubbish. They don't have a specific person in charge, just [someone] who is suddenly made a "security advisor". A guy who has never been in a similar context, has no experience in that regard and who loves to dress like an American contractor. Doesn't really make me feel much safer that he's deciding where I can and cannot go… (Weigand & Andersson, 2019, p. 505)

Notably, bunkerization practices structurally constrains foreign interveners to interact mostly with each other. This disadvantages local actors' ability to influence the design of development programs and is likely to increase the reliance on technical knowledge. Interveners and local communities can practically live in two different worlds: They go to different bars, restaurants, and live in different neighborhoods (Autesserre, 2014, p. 175). Especially in relatively safe areas, some interveners may realize that their fears about the security risks are unfounded because they lack a nuanced understanding of the local context.

The Influence of PMSCs

Following a structure-centric approach to securitization theory, we maintain that the political environment wherein security actors operate can explain how PMSCs have become empowered to establish the dominant narratives about security. The dominance of these narratives subsequently grants securitizing actors the authority to "use whatever means they deem most appropriate" to address security issues (Balzacq et al., 2015, p. 495). Hence, we assess here if the context of UN peacebuilding provides particular facilitating structural conditions that enable PMSCs to adopt and modify existing discourses in a way that allows them to entrench their own profit-oriented interests at the expense of broader goals such as peacebuilding and socio-economic development.

We argue that PMSCs tend to be given the authority to organize security risk management once they become involved in peacebuilding. PMSCs achieve this by depoliticizing security: They claim security as their

own field of expertise while disempowering alternative political solutions to address security risks. This claim to authority tends to be accepted by peacebuilding practitioners. The United Nations and related organizations are essentially "principals" that outsource security management to an "agent" (PMSCs). By employing security experts, information asymmetry emerges between PMSCs and their clients. PMSCs blatantly exercise expert authority to advocate the use of hard security measures (as this promotes their commercial interests), while peacebuilders often lack the knowledge and means to challenge these claims.

Over the past decades, UN peacebuilding has developed significantly. Two developments are particularly relevant with regard to security privatization. First, the emergence of more ambitious peace missions that operate in areas of ongoing hostilities and that incorporate a wide range of different actors and organizations has stimulated the standardization and centralization of peace operations (Autesserre, 2014, p. 75; Duffield, 2010, p. 458). This way, peacebuilding would supposedly become more efficient because "having different people or organizations doing contrary things is counterproductive" (Duffield, 2010, p. 458). Integrated UN missions were also replicated in different countries to enable the development of best practices and codes of conduct (Autesserre, 2014, p. 79). These structural changes have made technical expertise increasingly important. Peace development became understood as a linear process of removing the "obstacles" to liberal democratic transition by involving technical experts on issues such as conflict resolution and institutional reform (Chandler, 2017, p. 154).

Although such universal modes of thinking about peacebuilding were subsequently challenged by academics and interveners, standardization has provided another advantage for technical experts. As opposed to area specialists, technical experts can be rapidly deployed regardless of where crises break out. This makes them more employable for the United Nations and NGOs (Autesserre, 2014, p. 75). Consequently, peacebuilding became increasingly approached as resolving a set of technical problems with technical expertise (Autesserre, 2014, p. 77). The same has applied to security risk management in peacebuilding.

A second development pertains to the dramatic increase in perceived security risks for interveners. As peace operations expanded into unstable areas, the United Nations wanted to improve field security for aid workers (Duffield, 2010, p. 458). Pertaining to the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad in 2003, PMSCs and their advocates maintain that a new kind

of threat had arrived, where the UN flag could no longer guarantee the safety of peacebuilding staff (Duffield, 2010, p. 459; Pingeot, 2012, p. 23). The United Nations tends to explain this as a result of the changing nature of global conflicts, with emerging non-state actors and irregular armies that do not respect the neutrality of humanitarian personnel (Duffield, 2010, p. 457). Critics, however, have argued that it is mostly the peace mission itself that has changed.

As Duffield (2010, p. 458) argues, "besides pursuing a humanitarian agenda, integrated missions are instrumentally involved in attempts to reshape the social, political and economic structures of the countries concerned". This has led some groups to reject the United Nations' claim to impartiality and sometimes generates violent resistance. Nevertheless, these developments have increased demand for security services and have made the United Nations and related organizations more receptive to security expertise from third parties (Pingeot, 2012, p. 23). Peacebuilders came to believe that the existing approaches to security management were no longer adequate, which has stimulated the employment of technical experts on security.

Furthermore, security expertise is not a neutral skill. It shapes the way one views the world, what problems are identified in it and what solutions exist to solve them (Østensen, 2013, p. 35). As commercial enterprises, actors advocating for PMSCs articulate views on security risk management that promote the sale of their own services and equipment. According to Leander (2005a, p. 817), PMSCs "need to convince policy-makers that the product/service they sell is important for security and that it is more important than the alternative products/services sold by competitors … this pushes firms to try to shape the security understandings of their customers". Market incentives encourage PMSCs to become lobbyists, security advisors, and opinion makers in the global public sphere (Leander, 2005b, p. 612). If PMSCs successfully establish particular security discourses they increase the relevance of their security expertise while systematically disempowering other actors and alternative political approaches to security policy (Leander, 2005a, p. 811). Their discourses depoliticize security by claiming security policy as a prerogative for security experts, instead of viewing it as a subject of political contestation.

As Leander (2005a) notes with regard to the US national politics, security privatization has contributed to disempowering the "civil" component of the state and advocates of non-military approaches to security. Security debates are increasingly moved out of the public realm,

such as the US Congress and "into a restricted sphere where the executive, the military, the secret services and [PMSCs] can decide how issues should be defined and handled" (p. 819). This causes the securitization of particular policy issues. While Leander's claims are pertinent to national politics, the same logic applies to peacebuilding.

PMSCs play into the notion that peacebuilding missions encounter a new security environment and assert that interveners face permanent and pervasive threats that require the use of hard security measures (Autesserre, 2014, p. 225; Duffield, 2010, p. 460). This narrative provides an uncompromising view on the security risks interveners face and increases the need for technical expertise on security management. In peacebuilding, PMSCs enjoy a structurally advantageous position in exercising expert authority, as they seek to shape security policies in ways that bolster their commercial interests. Both the increased demand for security expertise and the high esteem for technical knowledge among peacebuilders provide two key facilitating conditions for PMSCs to establish dominant narratives about security. This gives the agent (PMSCs) leverage over their principal (the client). PMSCs tend to use this leverage to their advantage.

Similar to national political actors, PMSCs know that they compete with other parties that advocate alternative political options for security policies. Parties that advocate the use of local knowledge and local relations to mitigate security risks, or those who stress the need for diplomacy (Pingeot, 2012, p. 13). The more these political alternatives are used, the less relevant the services of PMSCs can become (Leander, 2005a, p. 824). To increase demand for their services and solidify their position as security experts, PMSCs are thus inclined to frame security issues in a way that disempowers competitors with political alternatives for security management. Since PMSCs are technical experts in the field of security, their claims tend to be accepted by peacebuilders. Peacebuilders accept the notion that security is something that should be dealt with by security experts while forgetting that PMSCs' framing of "security issues" is by itself the product of political discourse. Most interveners will feel as though they lack the knowledge to challenge the expert. As such, peacebuilders accept the securitization of security risk management by PMSCs, giving them much influence over the formation and implementation of security policies in peacebuilding.

These dynamics can also be observed at the DSS. The creation of the DSS after the bombing in Baghdad in 2003 has led to a drastic increase

in the outsourcing of security tasks by the United Nations (Pingeot, 2012, p. 13). The DSS subsequently began with "replicating and reproducing many of the features characteristic of the private security industry" (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 521). Like PMSCs, the DSS began to assess security risks as a function of the impact potential threats could have on operations or staff, and less as a function of the likelihood of attacks to occur in particular areas (Andersson & Weigand, 2015, p. 522). This is part of the reason why bunkerization practices have been adopted in widely varying security environments (Duffield, 2010, p. 459; Pingeot, 2012, p. 38).

The DSS has played a key role in advocating and standardizing the use of hard security measures and encouraging the employment of PMSCs in various peace missions (Pingeot, 2012, p. 40). At the same time, the leadership of the DSS "has expressed little interest in 'acceptance' as a security doctrine" (Pingeot, 2012, p. 40). Political alternatives to mitigate security risks that rely on local knowledge and political engagement with local communities are often no longer seen as adequate to guarantee the safety of interveners. Hard security measures have become increasingly preferred (Autesserre, 2014, p. 220).

Conclusions

Recently, humanitarianism has been privatized and heavily securitized through the strengthened political agency of powerful interventionist states in the Global North as well as profit-driven PMSCs. Considering that the problem of militarized and privatized humanitarianism remains comparatively understudied, this article critically reflected upon the key consequences of PMSCs in peacebuilding, based on the emerging scholarly literature on this topic. Our analysis supports two principal arguments. First, due to their inherent commercial interest in selling security services and equipment and their militaristic approach to security problems, PMSCs are likely to undermine peacebuilding effectiveness. PMSCs needlessly militarize humanitarian spaces, even in regions that are relatively safe, and increase physical and psychological barriers between interveners and aid recipients. This militarization unnecessarily intensifies insecurities among locals and foreign interveners, undermines the promotion of local ownership of development programs, and makes peace missions less responsive to their local environment.

Second, some structural developments in UN peacebuilding programs allow PMSCs to claim distinctive and quite unparalleled authority in determining security risk policies at the local level, devoid of democratic deliberation with local stakeholders and marginalized communities. PMSCs deliver specialized security services but simultaneously use this context to advance their own commercial interests, thereby disenfranchising domestic stakeholders who offer alternative political solutions for security policy while solidifying PMSCs' position as security experts in peacebuilding missions.

Our study points to several lines of further inquiry relevant to existing scholarly debates as well as policymaking. First, the privatization of public security in peacebuilding missions generates detrimental consequences in ways that undermine the political agency of local communities and minoritized communities therein. Further research should focus on the effects of state-led security provision and privatized security services on humanitarian spaces. Second, contemporary peacebuilding practices show that there is a mutually constitutive relationship between the proliferation of violence and unfettered capital accumulation.

How can transnational and local civil society groups and democratic checks and balances constrain PMSCs' tendency to deprive local stakeholders from charting their own destinies in terms of peace and development? Are there compelling normative justifications for the inclusion of profit-driven actors in humanitarian spaces? How and under which conditions could those profit-driven actors contribute and reinforce the political agency of local stakeholders in ways that could effectively generate peace and development? The answers to these important questions require further research among scholars of human rights, comparative politics, security studies, and international relations.

Finally, the continued infusion of opaque and profit-driven global actors into highly contested humanitarian spaces further complicates the politics of peacebuilding, especially in the Global South. Often, PMSCs and powerful interventionist states evade democratic accountability for their actions in highly contested spaces in the Global South. By presenting their agents as "experts", while regarding local stakeholders as foreign aid recipients, PMSCs and interventionist states denigrate the sovereignty and self-determination of local communities. It is high time that the politics of humanitarianism and peacebuilding respect the agency and autonomy of local communities, and external intervention occurs with the consent and the political agency of local stakeholders.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

FUNDING

NOTES

1. In 2011, the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries claimed that private military and security contracting had become a global phenomenon and estimated that the market turns about $100 billion in yearly profits.
2. The Nisour Square massacre in Baghdad in 2007, where Blackwater security guards were involved in the killing of civilians, accelerated the creation of the Montreux Document in 2008. This soft-law initiative rejects the notion that military contractors operate in a legal vacuum and outlines the legal obligations PMSCs are subject to. It also prompted the establishment of the International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA), an initiative by PMSCs to self-regulate the industry. The US Department of State announced in 2013 its intention to include ICoCA membership as a requirement for its contractors.

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