

8 | *Parapluies politiques*: the everyday politics of private security in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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This chapter explores the politics of everyday private security provision in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It first provides an overview of the private security sector in the DRC, to then provide a discussion of the rise of the sector, and subsequently situate it within the broader politics of everyday security provision by picking out and articulating some of the threads that make up the intricate fabric of Congo's security multiverse. It puts forward the premise that private security provision is a specific instantiation of a broader web of productive entanglements between state and society in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this web of associations, the very notions of public and private become subverted and tangled in a complex choreography of security actors at the centre of Congo's specific patterns of order-making and accumulation. In order to advance this premise, the exploration of private security provision in the DRC must be premised on, and articulated within, the broader everyday politics of security provision in the country. While for semantic reasons alone private security provision might be considered in opposition to public security, as we will see, this a priori is partially substituted for its opposite in the everyday politics of security provision in the Congo.

In making this argument, the purchase of the assemblage approach resides in its emphasis on association over institution and on fluid relations over fixed binaries in the composition of social worlds. Indeed, in Congo, a context where state institutions do not afford a generalized level of security, being (dis)connected in the right way to the right people assumes central importance. It is always a hot topic of conversation what new alliances have formed between big men, who has been able to enrol a powerful figure behind his hopeful scheme, and, more darkly, which new violent plots unfold along fractured but temporarily coinciding interests. After decades of state failure, Congolese have become masters in the art of association – as one interlocutor in Bunia put it aptly, 'here, you don't need technical know-how, you need technical know-*who*'.¹ This chapter explores how private security operates as an extension of this logic. In this context, binaries such as public and private cannot be the starting points of a study of everyday security provision but should

rather be taken as the ongoing outcome of novel associations and alliances between localized sets of actors, interests and contextual constraints. As we will see, the spread of private security companies in Congo over the last two decades has resulted in a landscape that cannot be reduced to either violent capitalism or state failure. Rather, private security companies help reinvent longer-standing inequalities and forms of association and exclusion in the DRC's particular brand of political economy. This chapter should be read as an attempt to unearth some of the entanglements between everyday security provision and the ongoing formation of this political economy in the places where private security companies thrive.

The Congolese private security sector at large

Private security companies are formally registered corporations that, in the DRC, provide a host of services, ranging from static guarding to risk assessment and from cash-in-transit to bodyguard services. As will be expanded upon below, private security companies – henceforth PSCs – first made their appearance in the DRC in the 1990s, when Mobutu's power started to crumble as a result of waning support from Western political elites (see Reno 2006). Now there are currently around one hundred PSCs (locally called *sociétés de gardiennage*) in the DRC, employing over thirty thousand security personnel, active everywhere from Kinshasa to the copper belt in Katanga and the volatile parts of eastern Congo.² Manned security, or 'static guarding' through the physical presence of human guards, is by far the most important service offered, to the extent that security consultancy, electronic security and cash-in-transit are negligible (constituting together only about 5 per cent of total activities).³ This 5 per cent includes military advisory and training services, a range of high-value contracts for the US Department of Defense, working to implement SSR and anti-LRA operations with the armed forces (FARDC).⁴ Employment in the (US\$60 million)⁵ sector is growing at an estimated rate of 5 per cent, or by 1,500 guards, annually.⁶ Concomitantly, despite ongoing consolidation in the sector through merger and acquisition, the number of PSCs has risen from thirty-five to forty-five in 2007 (De Goede 2008: 43) to around seventy in 2009 (Kasongo 2009) and to over one hundred in 2012. As in other African countries, the private security sector is dominated by a number of larger firms, often with expatriate management and/or ownership, existing side by side with a large number of smaller, national – and often only partly formalized – security companies.

Table 8.1 below – the result of over sixty interviews conducted inside and outside Congo – presents a comprehensive overview of the contemporary private security sector in Congo. As the table reveals, two companies (G4S and Delta Protection) together make up 33 per cent of the Congolese private security sector, while ten large companies make up roughly 70 per cent of the

market. It is important to note that this table provides a snapshot for 2013, and that numbers of guards per company shift constantly as major clients change contracts.

The table also indicates PSC coverage – a not unimportant issue given the sheer size of the DRC. Reflecting the fact that Congo has no national transport grid, private security companies often limit their services to either the western (mainly Kinshasa, Boma and Matadi) or the eastern part of the country. A Belgian director of the private security company ASCO, which is active only in Kinshasa and Bas-Congo, explains: ‘given that the context is so different in Kinshasa from the eastern Congo, any organization needs two country managers: one for the west, and one for the east, which is commercially and politically oriented not towards Kinshasa, but much more towards its eastern neighbours.’¹⁷ As a result, in eastern Congo, a different range of PSCs dominates the market to those active in Kinshasa: for instance, the Kenyan PSCs KK Security and Warrior Security and the Ugandan Top SIG, reflecting regional cultural, economic and geopolitical influence spheres, next to a number of local PSCs.

Company name	Employees	Approximate market share (in static security)	First active in Congo	Relations to state security	Deployment
ASCO	900	3%	2000	PNC	Countrywide
Bras Security	2,000	7%		PNC/ANR	Katanga
Delta Protection	5,000	17%	2000	PIR	Countrywide
Grabén Security	1,200	4%	2003	PNC	Eastern Congo
GSA	950	4%	2008	OPJ	Countrywide
G4S	5,000	17%	2001	PNC	Countrywide
HDW	900	3%	1994	PNC	Kivus
Magenya Protection	1,500	5%	1993	PNC	Kinshasa
New Escokin	1,500	5%	1987	PNC	Kinshasa
Top SIG	820	3%	2009	PNC/ FARDC	Eastern Congo
Total	19,770	68%			

Table 8.1 Overview of the private security sector in the DRC in 2013

Notes: ANR = Agence Nationale de Renseignements; OPJ = Officier de Police Justicière; PIR = Police d’Intervention Rapide; PNC = Police Nationale Congolaise

Source: Data compiled by author (originally appears in Schouten 2014: 123)

The predominance of manned guarding in private security services means that PSC guards – clad in uniforms that sometimes seem to mimic those of the Congolese police, sometimes of the army, or even the UN – are located at the gates of the compounds that punctuate the Congolese landscape. They are organized in teams that have a site supervisor – for larger clients – or a supervisor for a certain part of town. As PSCs are by law not allowed to carry firearms in the DRC, armed police are hired to back up the security arrangements with coercive power. Most PSCs also sport a rapid intervention team: a jeep with military-style open-air seats mounted on the back, on which a number of extra guards and armed police are transported in case of alarm. In non-urban settings, PSCs and Congolese police-for-hire usually accompany corporate vehicles moving between offices and operational sites. As a rule, management is expatriate, both reflecting ownership structures and because white staff are considered more ‘representative’ towards potential clients. Part of the service seems to consist of informal risk analysis by PSC management for their clients, and the larger PSCs also provide an evacuation service for when ‘things go wrong’.⁸

The trajectory and topography of Congo’s private security companies

As flagged above, in the vast country that Congo is – the size of western Europe – private security clusters predominantly around the geographical margins of the country: in Kinshasa in the west, and along the eastern borders of the country. Private security managers estimate that over 30 per cent of all private security guards are found in Kinshasa alone; if one adds the thousands of guards in Lubumbashi and Goma, over half of all Congolese private security guards are accounted for. The rest of the country is nearly completely devoid of private security companies. So how can we make sense of this landscape? As suggested by the global security assemblage approach, the significance of the private security companies is hardly graspable if we take private security companies as discrete actors. Rather, studies of private security assemblages in other contexts draw attention to the ways in which the spatial articulation of private security companies intersects with the spatial organization of *other* governance processes (see the chapter by Abrahamsen and Williams in this volume). This means investigating the specific sites and spheres of activity around which private security assemblages are constructed. Who are the main clients driving demand? What exactly is being secured? If theory is always for someone, for some purpose (Cox 1981), this arguably holds even more for security arrangements.

Most of the studies on private security companies in sub-Saharan Africa focus on specific classes of actor that deploy private security. They thus implicitly posit that functional differences between types of actor in Africa can

explain the prevalence of private security companies. A dominant suggestion is that the sites in Africa where private security companies concentrate are the locations where global capital ‘touches down’ (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011: 122); the individual nodes in this landscape of private security are the ‘pockets of productivity’ (Leonard 2008) or, as Hönke puts it, ‘transnationalised bubbles of governance’ (2010: 126): sites that contrast with the surrounding landscape by constituting concentrations of international economic activity. It seems that from Nairobi to Cape Town and from Freetown to Lagos, PSCs concentrate geographically in African capitals and around enclaves constituted by international organizations or industrial operations (often mineral extraction) owned and run by foreign corporations. A host of studies focuses exclusively on the latter, conveying the impression that the topography of private security companies concentrates predominantly around transnational extractive enclaves (Appel 2012; Ferguson 2005; Hönke 2013).

The emergence of private security in the DRC (1990–97): securing international business

On the surface, this argument seems to hold in the case of Congo. Indeed, the only previous study that provides an empirical mapping of the private security sector in the DRC confirms this: according to De Goede, private security companies concentrate around the mining sector because ‘it is the most important industrial sector in the country’ (De Goede 2008: 37). The reason why private security companies predominantly figure around mining and other transnational businesses in Congo can be traced back to the emergence of the private security sector, roughly corresponding to the collapse of the Zairean state in the 1990s.

In short, private security initially concentrated explicitly around the small groups of expats remaining during Mobutu’s demise – largely diplomats and mining entrepreneurs – who deployed PSCs to increase physical security faced with increasingly unreliable Zairean security forces. Interviews with those involved in setting up Congo’s first private security company indicate that the expat community – limited as it was by the 1990s – felt increasingly unsure about Mobutu’s capacity and willingness to guarantee their security, which he had hitherto done by deploying special FAZ (Forces Armées Zairoises) forces around expat premises. During the pillages of 1991 and 1993, military and civilians alike looted Kinshasa and other big towns, leaving much infrastructure destroyed in their wake. From guards of the established order and the role of foreigners therein, the Zairean security forces turned into the largest threat to that order, and foreigners and their assets were ready targets for looting and destruction. Because there were few expats left when the Zairean state collapsed, there was only a very restricted market for private security companies, concentrated mainly around the remaining critical sources

of revenue for the flailing Mobutu regime: the copper mines of Katanga and the diamond mines in Kasai.

The first private security company in Congo (then Zaire) was started by Belgian entrepreneur Philippe de Moerloose in 1984. DSA (Defence Systems Africa) started out by offering guarding services to select embassies and diplomatic residences in Kinshasa, and after 1991 also to other companies related to De Moerloose's business empire, famous for the fortunes made with Demimpex, his car exporter (De Goede 2008: 44; cf. Halloy 2007). The second PSC was Escokin (Entreprise de Service et de Commerce de Kinshasa), which started in 1987 as the internal logistics and security department for Mobil Oil, and would only gradually provide guarding (and other producer services) to further clients such as General Motors, Chevron and other American corporations then still active in Zaire. DSA and Escokin would remain the only two formal private security companies until, in 1992, the DSL (Defense Systems Limited) was introduced to Zaire by an American called Jonathan Garrett.⁹ DSL initially provided security to the operations of the diamond giant De Beers around Mbuji-Maji and to the American embassy through a subsidiary (USDS, US Defense Systems), later providing security for a broader section of expatriate-run businesses.¹⁰

To illustrate with gold mining in Province Orientale, there are over a thousand private security guards active in the province, most of which are indeed concentrated around industrial mining companies. As of 2013, there is not a single extractive industry company in that province that does not make use of private security.

Consolidation of the private security sector (1998–2003): securing the 'international community'

The picture that arises from the emergence of the private security sector in Zaire confirms the emphasis in the literature on transnational corporations – and particularly mining – as constituting the core of the topography of private security in sub-Saharan Africa. Given Congo's history of violence, it is seductive to slip into imagining private security as the result of state failure or somehow part of a particularly violent brand of extractive capitalism in Congo (e.g. Small 2006). It is, however, important to emphasize that the workings of global capital are not sufficient to explain the topography of private security companies in the DRC. On the contrary, demand for private security services has mostly come from actors that explicitly define themselves both as non-profit and as involved in state reconstruction. Next to mining, private security companies also concentrate around international actors that define themselves explicitly as non-profit: the NGOs and IOs that engage in disaster relief, humanitarian aid and other development activities associated with peacekeeping and state-building.

The addition of humanitarian actors to the topography of private security can be situated in the consolidation of the private security sector that roughly corresponds with the onset of the second Congo War, or, more specifically, with the formulation in 1997, by the L. D. Kabila regime, of the first regulatory disposition specifically targeting private security services since 1965.¹¹ This formed the legal framework that would compound the surge in private security companies with the arrival of MONUC (Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo) in 1999 (Kasongo 2009: 9–11).

Yet the use of private security by MONUC doesn't stand alone. Literature on humanitarian security notes an increasing reliance by aid organizations on private security companies (Cockayne 2006; Pingeot 2012; Stoddard et al. 2009). From the early 1990s, the UN had steadily outsourced more and more tasks to private security companies.¹² Throughout the 1990s, the UN had increasing difficulties staffing its ambitious missions, both in financial terms and in terms of human resources (Pingeot 2012: 22). This was due in part to a loss of interest in missions and a concomitant military downsizing after the end of the Cold War, which, in turn, also led to a surge in the availability of military trained personnel (Lock 1999). When MONUC was launched in 1999 after the Lusaka agreement, the UN would, in Congo, too, from the very start secure its premises and staff ('force protection') through a combination of MONUC Police (sourced from UN peacekeepers) on the one hand, and PSCs supported by armed Congolese National Police (PNC) on the other.¹³ By securing the complex and costly infrastructure that the UN often had to build from scratch in Congo, this security apparatus greatly facilitated the UN's work. Serving as a model for not only UN agencies but also the many NGOs and other humanitarian organizations making use of the same infrastructures on the ground, the UN's choice to work with PSCs would have a significant impact on the way aid would secure itself in Congo, and, subsequently, entrench security disparities between expats and local populations (Koddenbrock and Schouten 2014). In Goma, North Kivu, approximately 80 per cent of the roughly two thousand guards working for nine PSCs¹⁴ are deployed around the international development community, with most of the rest working for the few industrial mining corporations surviving and a small number for other businesses – the omnipresent mobile phone antennas and beer depots.

The Second Congo War thus meant the initial onset of a pattern that would subsequently stabilize into the contemporary characteristics of Congo's private security sector, namely its concentration around foreign aid on the one hand and foreign mining on the other. What is particularly striking is that the humanitarian community in Congo deploys the same security strategy of militarized compounds, and often makes use of the services of the same private security companies, as mining companies. To underscore that it is more than a coincidence that both types of international actor deploy private security

companies for their operations in Congo, we can point at the observation by Avant and Haufler, who note a broader convergence in the way that multinational corporations and aid organizations similarly secure their operations 'abroad'. As they put it: 'Although we agree that their missions and motivations are distinct, we are struck by intriguing similarities in their trajectories over the past 20 years in their overseas operations' (2012: 255–6; cf. Branovic 2011: 29). This seeming convergence overlaps with yet another: private security companies in the DRC, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, concentrate mainly around the few spaces dense with functioning infrastructure – the technical backbone crucial for the operations of transnational actors (Schouten 2014).

So what is the significance of the rise of the private security sector for the everyday politics of security provision in the DRC? In order to explore this question, this chapter deploys some of the insights from the security assemblage approach (see the chapter by Abrahamsen and Williams in this volume) to show how everyday private security provision resembles, differs from or tangles with the state security sector in the country. Essentially, the security assemblage approach rejects a priori assumptions based on institutional affiliation and foregrounds the multiplicity of actors that tangle in any specific security arrangement. Deploying this sensibility will also call into question the utility of the notions of public and private to qualify everyday security arrangements and practices in Congo. Following John Dewey's suggestion that 'the public' is an effect rather than a pre-existent reality to be called upon (1927), this chapter shows how the 'quality' of security as either public or private is rather the unintended outcome of schemes geared to secure ulterior objectives.

The two logics of everyday public security

Part of what makes Congo a failed state in the eyes of many is that the institutions that are *de jure* mandated to provide public security often *de facto* dramatically fall short of this legal ambition, because many of its agents seem to obey different logics altogether in deploying their coercive prerogatives. At the risk of brutal simplification, I suggest that for purposes of the present discussion these ulterior logics that pervade everyday security provision can be grouped under two distinct headers, even if in practice they might be instantiated simultaneously.

The first logic is private accumulation. Whether the reason is low – or even unpaid – salaries, simple greed, a heritage from long periods of conflict (Garrett et al. 2009) or the presence of some sort of broader and more ephemeral set of social norms (see Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen 2014), many of those who are supposed to provide public security are consistently involved in a form of privatized entrepreneurship. This goes for the Congolese armed forces (FARDC), the police (PNC) as well as for the ubiquitous intelligence agency (ANR).

These public security agents in Congo invert the imperative to ‘make things public’ and instead deploy their office to make things – and especially valuable things – private. One of the rare studies published on the topic, Eriksson Baaz and Olsson (2011), debunks the myth that predation is disorganized and ad hoc; evoking an image powerfully captured by Bayart et al. (1999), they show how, in the case of the PNC, extortion is highly organized and rents flow up structurally along command chains that seem to function best as hierarchies of predation. Most encounters with a representative of any of these institutions are accompanied by a demand for money, and many of them are part of broader parasitic schemes – with local civil authorities – which wrest resources from the ‘productive’ economy (cf. MacGaffey 1987; Emizet 1998). While the threat of coercion might not be manifest in any of these exchanges most of the time, it looms over all encounters with security agents all of the time.

The second logic that pervades the everyday provision of security is repression. If public security is often construed as ideally being about the security of all within a given national territory, in the DRC those in offices concerned by law with guaranteeing this hypothetical common security are often used to ends best characterized as ‘regime security’ instead (Reno 1998). Whether the hangover of colonial mistrust of its subject population, a legacy of Mobutu’s famed paranoia, or explicable with reference to some other cause, any action that is considered to impinge on what is construed as the interest of the regime – and this is itself an aleatory notion, malleable like wax in the hands of individual local representatives of the state – is liable to be responded to with threats, arrests or worse. While repression manifests itself in punctual eruptions of violence (breaking up demonstrations), the atmosphere of potential threat to state security looms over many an encounter with state security agents – particularly so in zones of special government interest such as important urban hubs or mining concessions that generate high rents.

While separable analytically, the logics of private accumulation and repression, conveniently, seem mutually reinforcing and often both haunt encounters with state security agents. A vocal civil society member, an artisanal miner operating in an industrial concession, or a successful entrepreneur might be arrested by a local security agent on some vague charge related to the security of the state, only to be released for as much money as possible. People will speculate long after about what logic prevailed in any such incident: intimidation or extortion.

What both logics share is first that they both act out in ‘public space’: the ‘stuff’ on which repression acts is most often public manifestations of discontent with the regime, and private accumulation often targets circulation of economic activities in ‘public’ spaces such as roads and marketplaces. Just as parasites need their host body, the political economy of state security in Congo is dependent on an outside; its spectre of repression is contingent

on imminent threats; its predation on 'productive' activities needs to stop short of extinguishing it (see Serres 1982). What they both also share is that they radically subvert the notion of 'public' both in relation to security and in relation to space, to the point where one wonders how useful the term 'public' is at all in Congo save to denote a (radical? subversive? but at least emancipative) ambition (see Englebert 2002). Anything is either suspect or a potential source of income, or both.

Because the logics of repression and private accumulation pervade what could otherwise be considered 'public' space, it disappears; or, as Filip Reyntjens (2005) puts it – insisting on holding on to the notion – public space is privatized and criminalized in Congo. Just to illustrate, one of the minute ways in which this happens is that security agents suck things out of the public sphere and 'make public matters private': one will be accompanied by an ANR agent away from the street, out of view, and any issue – failing to present some document which isn't even issued by government; the quantity of valuable product not declared, etc. – will be settled outside of public space, as a private affair. In the transaction, the settled event itself becomes criminal; who was a victim before is now complicit in the perpetuation of the skewed logics underpinning everyday public security provision in the DRC (see Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen 2014). While the ambition of many in Europe is to make their concerns public, it is no wonder that Congolese prefer to keep things private, perhaps as a response to living with decades of this (see Emizet 1998) – having one's interests circulate in public space, after all, entails a big risk. All this doesn't mean public security doesn't exist in the Democratic Republic of Congo; it rather means that public security provision is simply not the only thing happening. For instance, if public security might be the stated rationale for deploying an army unit at a particular road junction, whether public security is indeed served is something to be re-evaluated at each and every encounter with passers-by. The difference between public security and insecurity might reside somewhere in the fine balance between levying too much or just acceptable amounts of illegal taxes, and the kind of threats used to levy them (see Newbury 1984).

Everyday geographies of complicity

Yet to so oppose the state to society would also be to conjure up a fiction. As Migdal (2001) and Evans (1995) have forcefully argued, any clear opposition of the two rests on a combination of distortion and abstraction. In Congo, *private* affairs also work through associations with state security agents, to the extent that it might be said that any entrepreneurial enterprise that 'gets big' will irrevocably (be forced to) have what, following Congolese, I call a *parapluie politique* – 'political umbrella' – casting a fickle shadow of state endorsement and state security over its operations (see Utas 2011). The most

obvious of the ways in which this sort of 'public-private partnership *avant la lettre*' manifests itself is that big entrepreneurs have shadowy associations with powerful political players or high-ranking security agents (associations that, paradoxically, need to be made partially public to have the deterrent effect they're meant to have). According to an old pattern (Tull 2003), this concerns a monetized 'direct line' between client and patron that guarantees security in case of any issue. In Goma, the gossip is ubiquitous around which of the city's big entrepreneurs has ties to which political or military figures in a specific new deal; in the absence of newspapers, these rumours themselves might approximate the notion of 'public' closest (see De Boeck 2014). As a result, any encounter or contest between 'big men' will always be informed by their associations with respective politico-military hierarchies, or, to state it differently, there is no civil society; civil society is always polluted by the web of associations across the civil-military divide, which means that even encounters between civilians can, in fact, either be considered partially militarized or, conversely, quickly escalate. The associations between entrepreneur and umbrella are so blurred that in many cases it's not clear whether the political/security agent is strategized by the entrepreneur or whether, conversely, the entrepreneur is just a front for the operations of the political/security agent; in this game, the line between bribery and extortion is reinvented on a daily basis; as a result, the question whether it is 'the private' or entrepreneur which steers security geographies or 'coercion' or the soldier that shapes commercial activities is always an empirical one – and a slippery one at that, as it will often itself prove the outcome of individual struggles.

Congolese have developed a special term for the skill to navigate everyday geographies of extortion and bribery, calling the capacity to get by despite – or thanks to? – this organized anarchy *débrouillardise*, 'getting by' (see De Villers et al. 2002). This 'getting by' conjures up a vague modicum of complicity, necessary to stumble through the fog of uncertainty that constitutes the landscape of security agents and public authority more broadly. As our interlocutor from the introduction put it, one needs 'technical know-who' to navigate this landscape. An example of this relation of complicity is an association of drivers that might collect an envelope among its members and offer it to a high-ranking police chief, to be temporarily relieved of roadside taxes at the checkpoints under his command. These hierarchies of complicity might also shift over time; the security agent in question not only benefits from producing illegality in monetary terms, but has also gained the sovereign power of being able to denounce and disallow the activities that he endorses for a fee (see Verweijen 2013). While *débrouillardise* literally means 'un-fogging', it operates best within the fog, leaving intact a veil of opacity, an operating space of options where illicit transactions and successful *modus operandi* are kept in the dark, away from potential scrutiny.

Of security mimicry and membership¹⁵

Another way in which private affairs work through their entanglement with state security agents is through arrangements in which Congo's state security forces are hired for dedicated – private – security services. As already hinted at above, in urban areas – most notably Kinshasa, Goma and Lubumbashi – this privatization of public security is institutionalized through the guarding service of the Congolese police (PNC). If we just take Kinshasa, in the year 2000 this service consisted of 150 policemen; a year later it grew to 500 men, and became institutionalized in a separate *batallion de garde* with a separate camp (Camp Mobutu). In 2001, guarding services of the PNC had already expanded so much that the battalion had grown into a *brigade de garde* of 2,000 policemen.¹⁶ The growth of this branch of the police largely followed the proliferation of private security companies in the same period. As in the DRC private security guards are, by law, not allowed to bear arms, many private security companies have a number of dedicated police agents integrated into their patrol teams – thus folding the monopoly on force into their reach – and advise clients to add a police agent to the handful of private guards that make up the guarding team for any compound.

While initially driven by large international actors – mining companies, embassies, UN agencies – smaller NGOs and large hotels have followed their example and have also started to resort to such private security measures. For instance, many of the humanitarian organizations mimic the high military standards set by MONUSCO and UN agencies, leading to a homogenization of the outward appearance of the humanitarian presence in Goma. This involves barbed-wiring of compound walls and double entry gates, often with a security checkpoint. While many of the fortified aid compounds mainly cluster in one *quartier* (Himbi), humanitarian space nevertheless comprises an archipelago of compounds dotting the urban landscape of Goma (cf. Koddenbrock and Schouten 2014; Büscher and Vlassenroot 2010). Second, the centrality of security measures to interveners leads to increased mimicking of these measures by Congolese entrepreneurs, who wish to attract expats and their money to their hotels, restaurants and landholdings by building watchtowers and high fences around them. Wealthy hotels and bars now frequently also hire PSC guards and police agents, and build watchtowers and barbed-wired fences, in order to pass the UNDSS (United Nations Department of Safety and Security) vetting and become entangled in the intervention assemblage, and wealthy Congolese by preference 'hang out' and organize their meetings in similar settings as a way of affirming prestige. To differentiate themselves in the jungle of fly-by-night private security companies, some private security companies pride themselves on having 'special ties' to particular influential PNC figures to facilitate *efficient* protection for their clients. For instance, Delta Protection has French management composed of former French police,

which was involved in training their 'own' section of the nascent PNC, the PIR (Police d'Intervention Rapide), which is arguably more disciplined and better equipped than other branches of the PNC. As historical ties remain, Delta now has a privileged relationship with the PIR, offering their services as a unique selling point in private security contracts.

If private security companies mainly concentrate around the archipelago of infrastructures managed by mining companies and large aid agencies (Schouten 2014), the drive for membership in the prestigious and exclusive community of those who can afford private security has now trickled down to small shopkeepers and bars; and in large urban centres, private security guards flanked by a police agent are a ubiquitous sight at the entrance of all kinds of establishments. In today's Kinshasa, there are over eight thousand PNC guards in three *brigades de garde*, each headed by a separate general, while North Kivu, for instance, is home to a *batallion de garde* of approximately five hundred PNC agents. In sum, then, the rampant profusion of private security guards across urban landscapes has perhaps less to do with a quality of insecurity than with fashions and patterns of imitation reminiscent more of Bourdieu's conception of social competition over cultural capital. Nevertheless, the contradictory effect is that police agents, who could be said to literally embody the public, in effect are involved in the production of private space.

One unintended side effect of the proliferation of privately secured spaces which fold, via the 'private' police, the state monopoly of force into their set-up is paradoxically a contribution to some sort of contamination of the surrounding – criminalized – public space with a simmering public security. Indeed, parts of upscale neighbourhoods in Kinshasa (Gombe) and Goma (Himbi) are now home to chains of privately secured compounds where guards and police agents on private payrolls keep an eye on the road, as well. The agents on the payroll of private security companies are monitored better, and are at a higher risk of being fired. As a result of the far-reaching privatization of security in these areas, circulating at night has become more secure in these selected spaces – even for those who don't pay.

This pattern of order-making, in which the proliferation of spaces of private security leads to a contamination of Congo's polluted public space with actual public security, would not surprise some arch-liberal historians of state formation. The spectre of public goods as a side effect, an unintended outcome, of the pursuit of private wealth runs deep through classical political philosophy, dating back at least as far as John Locke, whose historical account of state formation in America takes government to be the natural consequence of the private ambitions of settlers.

Security as mediated (dis)connection

However, to equate the privatization of security in Congo with some sort of pattern of liberal proto-state formation would be to misread a subtle and partial side effect for a much larger and contradictory set of associations. First and foremost, the privatization of security in Congo leads to (yet another) fracturing of space between the expatriate and the local, between concentrated capital and infrastructure and its absences, between what in colonial times were called *l'Afrique utile* and *l'Afrique inutile* (Schouten 2014). This becomes evident if we leave Congo's main urban hubs and look at the articulation of private security in the remote mining regions of the east, where the *brigade de garde* does not formally exist. There, the intertwining of public and private security around internationalized infrastructures takes a different shape. From fieldwork and interviews in Province Orientale, it seems there is a structural tendency for mining corporations to maintain a few dozen armed police just outside the main corporate premises.¹⁷ As Table 8.2 shows, both PSC and PNC form an intricate part of the way in which industrial mining operations are organized in the DRC, with each mining company involving a security apparatus composed of dozens of PSC guards supported by armed police agents at a rate of at least ten to one. Field research indicated that, additionally, some mining corporations have reached a – financially mediated – ‘agreement’ with the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) to deploy on strategic locations around the private infrastructural network that mining corporations operate and maintain.

Mining company	Location of main base camp	PSC name	PSC number	PNC	FARDC
Anglo Kilo Gold	Mongbwalu (Ituri)	G4S (Group 4 Securicor)	100	28	–
Kibali Gold	Durba (Haut Uele)	Universal Security	154	30	50
Kilo Gold	Adumbi (Mambasa)	CSS (Congo Solution Security)	80	8–10	–
Loncor Resources	Yindi (Mambasa)	First Security	100	12	–
Mineral Invest	Wanga (Haut Uele)	–	–	3	2

Table 8.2 Overview of security arrangements for mining companies in Province Orientale

Source: Data compiled by author (originally appears in Schouten 2014: 123)

This kind of security public–private partnership was most institutionalized in the case of Kibali Goldmines in Haut Uele, where until 2013 FARDC were stationed around mining infrastructures – both machinery and road networks – throughout the concession, and were integrated into the paramilitary hierarchy of an Israeli-run private security firm called CSM (Congo Service & Maintenance) that secured Kibali’s operations (Matthysen et al. 2012: 36). While this particular arrangement has ended and many of the soldiers are out of view in the concession, Kibali Goldmines still has a dedicated FARDC base just next to its enclosure. But the point is a different one: just as the balance between buying protection and being forced to pay is a thin one for Congolese entrepreneurs, so reports circulated that, actually, the mining company had been forced into an uncomfortable straitjacket by its security subcontractor – forced to purchase all subcontracting from CSM and gradually losing control over large parts of operations. And, more broadly, this example shows that rather than standing opposed to the logic that drives complicity between Congolese entrepreneurs and their ‘political umbrellas’, the link between private security companies and expatriate-run enterprises is also meant to provide security through connections to power that operate in the background. This becomes evident if we follow the connections behind their local manifestation as security apparatus represented mainly by badly paid, uniformed, Congolese guards. While most international actors operating regionally as a rule employ transnational private security companies, expecting to retain a distance from local conflict networks, the private security companies that are most effective in volatile environments in Congo are thoroughly entangled with local conflict networks.

As an example, the Israeli PSC and logistics company discussed above was able to ‘facilitate’ the Kibali mine’s gold-mining operations in the north-east of Congo because of direct ties to the high military strata around President Kabila. While the set-up is now different, the mining company still sucks up security and public authority in and around its concession, indirectly wielding vast repression through local police agents and soldiers (Pax and CERN 2015). And while the mining company officially defers in conflict situations to ‘the appropriate national authorities’, just to be sure they also work through traditional authorities to achieve their goals. The mining company put a local chief who doubles as a *député national* on its payroll to intervene in conflicts with factions of the local population opposed to the mine.¹⁸ More broadly, in Kinshasa and Goma it is common knowledge among security experts which of the national or local private security companies are owned by which army or police general, meaning that many security personnel will be soldiers without uniform. According to the director of a private security company who worked for DSL at the time, a crucial part of the kind of services DSL offered concerned advice and mediation between clients (mostly extractive industries) and host-state security forces. As an example, the private security

company Top SIG supplies security to Heineken's full subsidiary Bralima, Soco Oil and other corporate clients operating in the most volatile zones of eastern Congo. It is able to deflect problems for its clients by being entangled in regional conflict networks, in part by having Congolese armed forces on the payroll, hiring different commanders of the Congolese armed forces in civilian garb, and by the fact that it is a subsidiary of the Ugandan Saracen, a South African mercenary network tied to Salim Saleh, a general involved in mineral smuggling and half-brother of President Museveni (Kinsey 2006: 29), who has been accused repeatedly by the UN of illicit weapons-for-mineral trade through the UPDF (Uganda People's Defence Force) in the DRC. A manager of one of the PSCs mentioned explains it as follows:

Our clients don't trust police and FARDC. But they need to be connected, both to community (for reliable information) and to armed forces (for intervention). Because they are operating in a *zone rouge*, mining clients also need connections to FARDC – it depends on *relations*: to be able to make a client's life easy, you need to have good relations.¹⁹

Observations from another national PSC manager confirm that their unique selling point is their ability to manage relations with unpredictable local authorities.

If you work in an environment such as this, you can sign your contracts, *être en ordre avec les autorités*, but then you need to go to the terrain. And there, you find perhaps rebels, perhaps FARDC people who aren't being paid by the authorities, local chiefs, same story. So if you want to work there, you have no choice: you need to be in order with these people. Need to find out what their needs are, and how to negotiate these. You need protection. So that is what we can do. We can manage, create a good climate. Why choose us? We know all officials, and we have all the logistical means.²⁰

As this PSC manager explained, by being associated with military hierarchies or the conflict actors that pose the most significant threat, the PSC can preempt and settle security issues before they reach the gates of the compound – without the client formally knowing.²¹ The advantage for international clients is that they can *claim* to be disconnected as a legal entity from local conflict networks in volatile environments, but in practice *effective* disconnection and security are possible only by being associated with conflict networks in the right way – through powerful local intermediaries.²² The goal of the private security managers is to become the exclusive intermediary and therefore obligatory passage point for their international clients; the central spokesperson on the dangers of operating in eastern Congo, able to keep international clients behind their walls while they act on behalf of the company in relation to

local authorities, whether administrative, traditional or illicit. For international actors, this means they can choose to work with international PSCs (with the benefit of adherence to global standards) and national ones (with the benefit of embeddedness and smoothed political connections). By being related to the 'right' general, clients are shielded from *other* predatory state representatives.

The informal ties of private security companies are part of a broader repertoire of 'risk management' strategies that allow international actors to maximize leverage and profitability stemming from the high risks involved in operating in Congo, while minimizing accountability. All such strategies crucially hinge on the importance of being connected to the right people in the right way, while avoiding the wrong kind of connections. The second factor has to do with the subcontracting of logistical chains by Western actors. As indicated, international actors control transnational logistical chains through networks of subcontractors. In many cases in Congo – particularly for companies relying on 'market access' and thus nationwide distribution chains for profits – these networks of subcontracting mean that, ultimately, local entrepreneurs are responsible for high-risk logistical operations in volatile environments. This means they bear the brunt both of material damages inherent in navigating regions where transport infrastructure is most notable for its absence, and of navigating the choreography of checkpoints where different security networks engage in often illicit taxation.

The advantages for multinationals of this strategy of governing by 'discharge' (see Hönke 2010) are threefold. First, they retain private control over the whole logistical chain. Second, by outsourcing to local contractors, they can 'squeeze contracts', as one corporate manager active in eastern Congo put it, meaning they can maximize profit for services that don't conform to international labour standards. Third, through subcontracting, they diffuse accountability for engagements that their activities entail with conflict actors. As an example, I found that Heineken's national subsidiary Bralima paid logistics subcontractors money that subcontractors need to pay at checkpoints of the rebel movement M23, thus contributing to the sustaining of human rights abuses in eastern Congo (Miklian and Schouten 2013). As another example, many NGOs and humanitarian organizations in Goma, eastern Congo, hire extensive premises behind thick barbed-wired compound walls from local businessmen and women in order to disentangle themselves from local security threats. Yet it is common knowledge in Goma that many of the premises concerned in prime locations are the property of regional warlords, often investments to launder money gained through illicit mineral exports (Schouten 2011).

While private security companies offer security by forming an entanglement with political power, conversely formal privatization is also a way for Congolese political elites to actually increase their control over pivotal spheres of activities and strategic resources by privatizing economic activities *away*

from political contenders (see Hönke 2010: 117; Hibou 2004: 5). Because the regime in Kinshasa and regional civil and military authorities depend on revenues from such extraverted ‘pockets of productivity’ (Leonard 2008), the formal (and informal) presence of the DRC state is concentrated in and around the topography of critical infrastructures (Schouten 2014). As an extension of the way politico-military power in Congo connects to business, this means that Congolese government officials attempt to maximize participation in revenue-sharing from infrastructural nodes’ productivity through personal relationships, thereby becoming obligatory passage points for the functioning of transnationalized business (Kuditshini 2008; cf. Nest 2002). NGO and mining operations not only bring important resources directly to central government (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2009); by laying out infrastructure and constituting a demand for expanded security, they might also extend political and economic control over territories where the government hitherto had only a weak presence. In that sense, business and humanitarian spaces are also government spaces, infrastructurally extending the hand of the state. Private security companies do not necessarily weaken, but rather reconfigure, state power, reinforcing regime interests in those infrastructural spaces where privately secured international investments circulate. As such, private security companies are part and parcel of the contemporary reinvention of the spatial model of ‘archipelago state formation’, which in Congo strongly echoes the selective spatial manifestation of colonial power.

Conclusions

This chapter has outlined some of the politics at play in everyday patterns of private security provision in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In outlining some of the differences, overlaps and tensions between *de facto* modes of public and private security provision, it hoped to illustrate a number of points that can be summarized as follows. First, the private security sector in Congo is thoroughly Congolese. While it might be fruitful to apply some analytical insights emanating from other contexts to the private security sector in Congo (see, for instance, Schouten 2011 and 2014), crucial aspects of the politics of security will then always elude the observer. I have discussed how private security assemblages in Congo reflect two broader Congolese logics of everyday security provision. First, private security provision is as much an extension of the logic of the ‘political umbrella’ that is both a predator of, and exceeds, the private security sector as it is a service of static guarding. Second, and by extension, private security is also an instantiation of the logic, dominant in the Congo, of security as ‘being (dis)connected’ in the right way. It is here in particular that an assemblage approach – foregrounding the quality of connection over institutional affiliation – has most purchase. Private security companies can only ‘secure’ if they are plugged into broader everyday geographies of complicity

that make up the ever-shifting fabric of Congolese social worlds. The quality of these connections and their implication for the balance between public and private is difficult to generalize, as it is rather the outcome of everyday (re)negotiations between stakeholders. Third, in assessing the role of private security in the overall landscape of security provision, public and private needs to be taken as endogenous to everyday security practices; as we have seen, public security might result as the unintended outcome, as a side effect, of efforts to attain ulterior goals. An example of this, the proliferation of *private* security arrangements in Congo might, counter-intuitively, have led to a surge in public security in some places. Finally, while this chapter has attempted to outline some of the insidious ways in which predation pervades everyday security provision, I have hoped to underscore that predation, repression and private security are all contingent on the existence and reproduction of an 'outside', whether in terms of productive economies on which to piggyback or criminalized public spaces from which to establish distance. In articulating these points, I have hoped to contribute to ongoing debates on the politics of security provision and the distribution of public authority more broadly by stressing the contingency of notions that are normally taken as universal a priori in everyday practice.

Notes

- 1 Interview in Bunia, 2014.
- 2 Estimates vary, however, according to measurement methods, reaching as low as 17,500; yet such measurements seem to correspond exactly to the number of larger – 'above board' – PSCs.
- 3 Interview, G4S.
- 4 De Goede chooses to exclude more military-oriented security services in her overview of the Congolese private security sector, and did not find such security services in 2007 (De Goede 2008: 36).
- 5 2011 estimate by DRC PSC management triangulated with other PSCs.
- 6 Interview, G4S Kin. This correlates well with an extrapolation of current figures back into history: De Goede estimated the total PSC population in the DRC at 25,000 in 2007 (2008: 42).
- 7 Interview, PSC manager, Kinshasa, 2012. This holds not only for PSCs; most large institutional entities – corporations, embassies, NGOs – have dedicated managers for the east.
- 8 Source: interviews with PSC management, Kinshasa and Kigali.
- 9 DSL was founded in 1981 by Alistair Morrison, a former SAS officer (Vines 1999: 134). As such, it was one of the earliest transnational private security companies in the world. DSL was the second PSC founded by former British Special Forces, after ControlRisks, which had been founded around 1975. During its early years, it was deployed to protect oil installations across the African continent and, for instance, also guarded diamond companies during Angola's civil war.
- 10 Interview, ASCO.
- 11 *l'Arrêté ministériel 006/97 du 9 juillet 1997*, followed by *l'Arrêté ministériel 008/98 du 31 mars 1998*.
- 12 Among one of the first such contracts, it hired DSL in the former Yugoslavia as early as 1992, for a range of services that would employ, at its height, 430 DSL staff in 1995 (Østensen 2011: 16–17; Vines 1999: 134).
- 13 Interview with UNDSS, 2011.

14 Whereas Büscher and Vlassenroot found only four PSCs in Goma (KK Security, Delta Protection, Graben Security and Intersec) in 2008 (2010: 267), this number has doubled in less than two years (in late 2010, these were complemented by HDW, Magenya, Royal Sec, Star Sec, Top Sec and G4S). Source: survey conducted in Goma, November/December 2010.

15 Being obviously borrowed from the title of Ferguson (2002).

16 Interview, *brigade de garde* commander, Kinshasa, September 2011.

17 A review of sources indicates the same holds for the MIBA diamond mines, where a security apparatus consisting of 300 armed police and 1,000 industrial guards was managed and surveilled by OSS's approximately thirty to sixty all-expat employees and the ANR (Congolese secret service) (Amnesty International 2002a, 2002b: 8). According to reports, the ruthless approach of OSS – and the significant difference made by their introduction of security technologies such as body scanners (De Goede 2008: 49) – did manage to reduce losses substantially (Renauld 2005: 14), re-establishing not only a certain – albeit controversial – distance between the informal and transnational formal mining economies, but also a flow of mineral revenues to the Kabila regime.

18 Interviews in Watsa, December 2014.

19 Interview, Top SIG, Kinshasa, 2012.

20 Interview, CSS Beni, 2011.

21 Interview, Goma, September 2012.

22 Interview, Top SIG, Kinshasa, September 2012. In a similar instance, G4S was accused of using US money to pay Afghan warlords to provide security for US military operations (see Tiron 2010).

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