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Military Culture and Security: Boundaries and Identity in the UK Private Military Security Field

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Abstract

This study examines the market for British military expertise in the commercial security sector. It focuses predominantly on people who have served in the armed forces, or worked closely with them in private security. It is argued that the UK private military security sector forms a coherent social 'field' based around the commodification of military forms of capital through which the emotional reward of military style work can be re-experienced in civilian life. Using in-depth interviews, the study analyses the experiences of practitioners working across the field and explores the implications that this has for our understanding of the private security phenomenon.

The study demonstrates how the private military security sector commoditises the emotionally reliable capacity to exercise coercive force inherent to the military habitus. Through the exchange of this 'military capital', private military security replicates the more 'offensive' practices of state militaries. These practices often sit in tension with the commercial imperative of the sector. The experience of military service and transition into private security work is examined highlighting how the combat-oriented culture of elite military sub-units dominates the commercial security sphere, particularly in those 'fringe areas' of the field where transparency is limited and ethical boundaries ambiguous. The replication of these state-like practices in the civilian marketplace highlights paradoxes inherent to these forms of 'security'. This provides an opportunity for researchers to better understand our social construction of 'security' in its state and private forms. The study explores how the 'symbolic capital' of state exceptionalism, possessed by veterans of 'high policing' Special Forces units, has been central to the evolution of the field, and provides indicative evidence of the opportunity this affords state and private elites to extend their capacity to exercise autonomy and control in a manner that creates new, 'hybrid' forms of sovereignty.

Keywords

Private military, private security, military culture, military-civilian transition, field and capital

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Chapter 1 Introduction and Overview

Introduction and Research Aims

Writing before the invasion of Iraq, Singer in his book *Corporate Warriors* (2003) observed that an undeniable change was taking place in the outsourcing of military activity to private companies. He described the actions and influence of the Virginia based military consultancy MPRI on the outcome of the Bosnia conflict during the late 1990s, and the subsequent widespread engagement of outsourced military logistical functions during the Kosovo campaign of 1999. While Singer began his investigation focusing on the outsourcing of functions previously the preserve of state military forces, his enquiries led him to conclude that 'Private companies are now responsible for the provision of security in society on a scale not seen since the formation of state militaries in the eighteenth century' (Singer, 2003).

This study seeks to develop the literature of private security by focussing on the market for British military expertise in the commercial provision of security. It is concerned predominantly with people who have served in the armed forces, or those from other backgrounds who have worked closely with them, in private security. Britain has been at the heart of the global private security phenomenon, and former British military personnel at the heart of these businesses (Singer, 2003:12; Kinsey, 2006). The British security industry has a number of characteristics that make it worthy of discrete study. Britain has cultural traditions and norms relating to the use of coercive force in society that are distinct from those of the United States and other European countries. The British armed forces were the first modern professional military to be formed in Europe and, although a state organisation, had its roots in the commercial imperatives of early modern colonialism; the British Navy emerging from a tradition of 'for profit' privateering in the mid-1600s to the 1800s; and the Army tracing its history, at least in part, to the commercial charters granted to the colonial trading companies (Kinsey, 2006:35-40). Prior to the First World War, the main function of the British military had been the policing and security of Britain's colonies. This tradition of policing did not emerge from the 'Peelian' mould of the domestic

British constabulary, but instead from the legacy of colonial mercantile adventures and, in particular, that of the British East India Company and its successor the 'Raj' administration (Phillips, 2016). Thus, the institutional memory of organised violence in the pursuit of commercial interests could be seen to reside within the British military in juxtaposition with the more 'statist' tradition of Cromwell's new model army (Chandler, 2003). These traditions have sustained against the backdrop of post-war de-colonialisation (Harvey, 2005:55-56) and make the British tradition distinct from that of the United States, the other major player in the emergent private military security sector.

Public attitudes in Britain towards the commodification of force, particularly where this is regarded to be reminiscent of the colonial past, heavily influence perceptions and attitudes towards private military security. Indeed, the British transition to neoliberalism differs markedly (in process if not effect) from that of the United States and other nations (Harvey, 2005:55). The British public have remained more sceptical than their US counterparts over the privatisation of key areas of state provision (Harvey, 2005:61). The extent to which these societal attitudes influence actors in the private security field is key to understanding the nature of this fundamental change to our social landscape.

It was the explosion of military style private security activity that accompanied the invasion of Iraq in 2003 that brought the private military security phenomenon fully to the attention of the public in Britain and America. In this conflict there appeared something new and different about the extent to which civilian contractors were engaged in 'security' activity that was indistinguishable from the role that the public had previously understood to be the business of the military and police. The scale and visibility of private security activity in Iraq inevitably became a focus of media attention. Public disquiet grew, as evidence emerged that commercial organisations with the capability to wield lethal force were playing a major part in the project to stabilise Iraq following the downfall of Saddam Hussein. This disquiet was not only the result of news articles that illustrated a range of dangerous and illegal behaviour being carried out by private security employees (Daily Mail, 2009; Der Spiegel, 2009), it spoke also to the sense that a longstanding societal norm was being breached; that private companies,

aligned to the maximisation of profit rather than patriotic duty, were taking over functions that even the most trenchant libertarian would, a decade earlier, have regarded as the sole preserve of the state. This sense of dissonance was heightened further when, under the administration of George W. Bush, the same companies active in Iraq were commissioned to provide security on US soil in the wake of the devastating Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (Scahill, 2005). Although Iraq may have been the 'tipping point' that brought the private security phenomenon to public consciousness, the transformation of the state's relationship with those who were charged to provide 'security' in society had been happening in less spectacular ways for a number of years.

The neoliberal reform agenda that took hold in both the UK and US during the 1980s had, for some time prior to the Iraq war, been engaged in recalibrating the relationship between the citizen and the state. The dogma of the market's superior ability to distribute scarce resources efficiently had been established as a central political narrative in response to the economic crises of the 1970s and ideological polarisation of the Cold War. State-centred economic models came under ideological attack and state-interventionism in markets became associated with economic inefficiency. With the ideology of market superiority established, the 'old liberal' ideas of the *'laissez faire'* economy, where the state's primary responsibility was to remove itself from untoward intervention in the private commercial sphere, was superseded by a new conception of the role of the state. Known as 'neoliberalism', this held that the state's central function should be the active promotion and creation of markets, particularly in formerly state-controlled areas of economic life (Harvey, 2005).

The end of the twentieth century saw the creation of widespread programmes of privatisation. While initially these programmes focused on the sale of state-owned industries, very quickly neoliberal principles were being extended into a wide range of state-run services: transport, healthcare, housing, policing, criminal justice and the military all became the focus of initiatives to improve their efficiency through marketisation. In so doing, this newly experienced commodification wrought profound change in a range of social activity inextricably tied to the manner in which the state exercised its governing function.

In turn, the state responded through the generation of new ways of governing the results of which were often surprising and paradoxical. Scholars of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1979) observed that the 'retreat' of the state did not result in a weakening of 'state-like' influences in the lives of ordinary citizens. Instead, the functions of the state became dispersed and devolved throughout society, exercised by a host of 'civil society' organisations, including commercial companies, who found themselves with a newly adopted responsibility for controlling and influencing the behaviour of individuals (Rose, 1999; Rose and Miller, 2008; 2010).

If the nature of government has become more complex in the neoliberal era, so has the nature of security. Security has been a defining responsibility of nation states since their conception. The act of providing security rests on the legitimate ability to use coercive force, a function over which, in the Weberian tradition, the state maintains a monopoly. Foucault has argued this symbolic monopoly is so complete that attitudes to the modern state differ little from the deference paid to the Kings and Emperors of pre-modernity (Foucault, 1978:88-9). Yet, as Adam White (2011:89) highlights in his examination of the political economy of private security, no state (or sovereign) has ever exercised 'a perfect Weberian-style monopoly over the provision of security'. Contemporary scholars of governmentality demonstrate that the political construction of hegemonic sovereignty afforded to the modern state is largely fictive; that the exercise of power has always been the result of a network of arbitration between a complex array of competing needs, advocated by social assemblages both public and private (Rose and Miller, 2010:274; Mann, 1988; Poggi, 1978; and Foucault 1980). Thus, the exercise of 'rule' has only ever been an attempt to guide, channel and direct an unwieldy collection of fractious interests towards a conclusion politically constructed as representing the 'common good'. The ambiguity of 'governance' is mirrored in the study of security in its various forms. Singer argues that the modern state's monopoly of both domestic and international force has been an 'historical anomaly' (Singer, 2003:39) having only occurred over the last 200 years, and that, even during this latter period, this proposed 'hegemony' is less clear cut than many of the political and social narratives of modernity would have

us believe. He goes on to propose that there should be no expectation that ‘in the future’ organised violence would be restricted to the public realm.

Since the end of the Second World War changes to the nature of state governance have been both mirrored and exacerbated by changes in the nature of conflict. In her book *New and Old Wars* Mary Kaldor (2012) addressed the way in which a confluence of factors has served to alter the nature and behaviour of participants to contemporary violent struggles. Globalisation and ethnic conflicts have blurred the distinction between the legitimate actions of nation states and those of private organisations including criminal groups. In responding to this, the distinction between state policing and military activity has become indistinct and conflated. Kaldor proposes that these changes are simultaneously radical and regressive, avant-guard and antiquated. In this she encapsulates the inherent tension in interpreting the growth of the private military security industry. The anthropologist Joshua Woods concurs that the roots of the contemporary private security phenomenon can be seen in cultural models of non-state violence that have endured since the Middle Ages (Woods, 2010). Thus, the question of the ‘real nature’ of modern private security is key to our understanding of the true nature of both contemporary conflict and neoliberal power. In different interpretations what is happening in private security can be seen as both a substantive societal progression towards an inevitable ‘free market’ logic (Avant, 2005; Brooks, 2000b, Stanger, 2009), or a social realisation of the true nature of sovereign power; evidence of the frailty of the Weberian myth of state hegemony and a return to pre-modern social behaviour. This ambiguity between competing constructions of progress and regression make the definition of contemporary private security both problematic and imperative.

The breadth and extent of the private security phenomenon has been rehearsed in a number of academic texts and industry surveys¹. While establishing the true

¹ Jones and Newburn (1995) described the extent of the privatisation of security in Britain in the 1990s. Brodeur (2010:255-283) analysed the available sources of data on private security, and the scale of the industry in European countries (including data provided by Morr  (2004), Van Steden and Hubert (2005), Van Steden and Sarre (2007) and De Waard (1999)). Brodeur’s work includes statistics for the United Kingdom (2010:269) as well as international statistics. He identifies that, as of 2006, in Canada, South Africa and the United States private security employees considerably outnumbered the figure of public police, while in EU countries the growth rate of private sector security employees

scope of the industry remains problematic (Brodeur, 2010:258), it is clear that the number of commercial private security and military employees now eclipses that of state police and security employees in many developed nations. Beyond the economic impact of the growth of private security, the phenomenon has profoundly changed the way that society views the commercial use of militarised techniques and practices by private sector actors. This social change is most evident in the manner in which private security is now portrayed in popular culture. Prior to the Iraq war of 2003 public perceptions of the private security employee were dominated by constructions of low skilled 'watchmen', unethical 'gangsters' or nihilistic 'hired guns' (Livingstone and Hart, 2003). Military activity by private participants was usually viewed through the prism of the Cold War era mercenaries presented in popular fiction and film such as the 'Dogs of War' (Irvin, 1980) and 'The Wild Geese' (McLaglen, 1978). However, since the Iraq War private military companies have become a staple of the entertainment industry - this includes a growing literature of private military memoirs (Shepherd, 2008; Fainaru 2008; Geraghty, 2007) journalistic accounts (Pelton, 2006), film (Loach, 2011) and video games (Call of Duty, 2014; Blackwater, 2011). While the cultural stereotype of the poorly paid 'mall cop' persists, the competent and often sinister figure of the private military contractor, once only an invention of dystopian science fiction writers, now populates a wide range of media space.

While media representations of the private security actor are worthy of study in their own right, they are indicative of the breadth of social change that has been wrought in relation to privatised security and military activity. Accepting parallels with public policing, the nature of these new forms of private security must, 'be as much a matter of symbolism as of substance' (Reiner, 2008:314). Thus, media representations give us a key indicator of the extent to which the scope and

outstripped that of public Police in all jurisdictions. In the Small Arms' Survey of 2011, Nikolas Florquin (2011) estimated that the private security industry employs between 19.5 and 25.5 million employees globally (ibid:101) and utilises 1.7-3.7 million firearms (ibid:116). The CoESS (Confederation of European Security Services) 2011 report demonstrated growth in the numbers of private security employees in almost all European jurisdictions between 2008 and 2011 (CoESS, 2008; 2011) and assessed that by 2013 the United Kingdom hosted 2500 security companies employing 364,586 employees. The Sector had annual revenues of €3,970 million, with one security officer to 170 inhabitants by comparison to 1 State Police Officer to 382 inhabitants (CoESS, 2013; 2015:24). This figure does not include in-house services or those working internationally in areas of the private security field where UK security qualifications may not be required.

breadth of 'that which is socially conceivable' in the private security realm has been extended. This extension has created new opportunities for those working in the private military security sector. Indeed, the identification and development of new areas where military capacities can be commoditised remains a constant focus for those involved in the 'business' of private military security. Thus, while it cannot be maintained that the attitudes and actions of the private security practitioner (or 'contractor', or 'business-person' or 'entrepreneur' etc.) are the unique determinant of the industry's evolution and development, they are central, and of critical importance. The role that these private purveyors of force play in the creation of these new 'opportunities', and in the extension of their 'field' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) of activity, is the subject of this study.

The expansion of private forms of policing and military activity has only recently become the subject of a unified field of scholarship (Abrahamsen and Leander, 2016:4-6) with researchers adopting different positions as to the nature and effect of this emergent industry. For some it represents an existential threat to our democracy (Silverstein, 1997), for others a humanitarian opportunity (Brooks, 2000b) and, for the majority, a complex and unrestrained experiment the eventual outcome of which is highly contingent (Petersohn, 2015) and clouded with uncertainty (Avant, 2005; Abrahamson and Williams, 2011). Despite this uncertainty, there is a consensus reflected in the literature that private sector military and security activity is 'here to stay' (Krahmann, 2010a:11; Singer, 2003:230; Kinsey 2006:151, Chesterman and Lehnardt. 2007:forward). Yet, the industry itself stubbornly defies classification (Kinsey 2006:9; Carmola, 2010; Berndtsson, 2012); its fluid structure and ever evolving service offerings respond to a host of factors: economic, political, jurisdictional, regulatory and market related (Avant, 2005). While a number of taxonomies of the sector have been attempted many of these reflect understandings more closely linked to epistemological concerns than to the lived experience of this emergent phenomenon.

Thus, the question remains what is the nature of these new forms of private security? Are the changes that we have witnessed indicative of a regressive trend towards the instability and inequity of the pre-modern mercantile violence

(Cerny, 1998); or does the growth of privatised forms of security represent a welcome, liberal pluralisation of the control of coercive force that, if sufficiently 'anchored' (Loader 1997a, b, c; Loader and Walker 2007), will assist in distributing security more effectively in society? Sitting at the heart of this question is the identity of the private security actor themselves. How do they make the choices they make in the course of their work? How do they interpret the legitimacy (or otherwise) of their actions and profession? Do they see themselves as soldiers, as police officers, as business people, or as something that pre-dates and/or transcends these modern constructions of role and identity? Do private security actors consider their work a practical extension of the Liberal state (Krahmann, 2010a), or are they purist market actors (Avant, 2005)? Are they criminals operating with a cloak of legitimacy (Rothe and Ross, 2010), or humanist saviours of a dysfunctional global order (Brooks, 2000a)? Does private security challenge the power of the state (Silverstein, 1997), reinforce it, or change it to a new normative condition the impact of which is yet to be fully realised? What can we learn about the industry and its development by focusing on private security actors?

In this thesis I sought initially to provide an insight into these questions through the examination of a group of people involved in work for private companies engaged in the type of activity that had become the focus of public attention; security work in hostile environments. I identified the existence of a 'field' of private military security which coalesced around the possession of certain types of skills and competences, predominantly acquired in military service, and which afforded those active in the field a sense of community and shared endeavour. As the research progressed, the centrality of military service to participation and conduct within the field became clear, as did evidence that the activity of those working in the field extended across wide portfolio of security related services. These practices were enacted both internationally and domestically, and included activity where the potential for physical violence varied considerably, but where the enactment of alternative forms of control and coercion could have a significant social impact nonetheless (see Chapter 8 on covert surveillance). The result is a portrait of a community of practice, predominantly, but not exclusively

constituted of British military veterans, whose business has become the sale of forms of military expertise in the private security market. My thesis explores how this community is constituted, the range and nature of activity its members undertake, and how members of this community make the defining decisions between behaviours and actions they deem acceptable, and those which fall beyond the norms of accepted practice in the field. Through this it has been possible to theorise this area of private military security provision, and to examine the implications that this may have on our understanding of security in its commercial, state and 'hybrid' dimensions.

Research Questions

In pursuit of the broader questions outlined above, my empirical work focussed on the micro level and, initially, asked the following questions:

- How did the interviewees socially construct the area of private security activity in which they were engaged? How did they interpret the role and constitution of this private security activity within the broader society/societies?
- How did interviewees construct the lived experience of their work in private security? What factors influenced this construction?
- How did the interviewees construct social boundaries between normative and transgressive behaviour in their working environment. What factors influenced these constructions of transgression and normativity?

As the centrality of military identity to the 'field' of private military security activity emerged, so the following research questions were incorporated:

- How did interviewees construct the experience of transition between their former state/military work and their work in the private security?
- How did interviewees socially construct their experience of state/military service? Who did they perceive themselves to have been, how did they perceive the organisations in which they served, which of these factors were key to their transition to, and practice in private security?

Through these questions I aimed to gain an understanding of who participated in military private security, how they participated, why they participated, and to develop theory that could provide an indicative insight into broader questions relating to the impact of private security on society.

Private Security Studies: Posing Questions About Private Force in Society

The growth of private forms of security in the post-Cold War era has given rise to a growing societal, and academic, focus on this emergent industry. In recent years this has coalesced into a combined field of scholarship known as private security studies (PSS). Private security studies began to emerge in the 1990's, and developed during the first decade of the new millennium (Van Meegdenburg, 2015; Abrahamsen and Leander, 2016:4-6). This field represents the convergence of a number social science epistemologies, many of which already had a cross-disciplinary character. Criminologists examine policing in its public and private forms; International Relations scholars and conflict researchers, the global impact of new forms of private military and constabulary activity. Legal scholars and political scientists focus on governance and control over the use-of-force by private companies. Sociologists explore the impact of privatisation on military organisation and ethics, and scholars of gender and race examine the manner in which the commodification of coercive force may reinforce, or exacerbate, societal inequalities.

Until their convergence in the field of private security studies, epistemologies dealing with policing and the military had remained somewhat separate in character. This was a legacy of the Westphalian system of nation states, and the rise of national citizenries in the 19th Century (Singer, 2003). Together these factors had created the modern 'Weberian' status-quo that, throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries, saw nation states draw an increasingly clear distinction between the 'constabulary' nature of coercive force exercised on domestic citizens, and the 'military' nature of force used on the state's external enemies. This bifurcated the academic disciplines that addressed the use of coercive force by states in the domestic (policing) and international (military) spheres. Despite some early attempts (Mannheim, 1941), criminology struggled to conceptualise

state military conduct in international conflict as falling within a realm where it could be analysed through a criminological lens. Crime, it appeared, pre-supposed functioning societal norms against which transgression could be measured; circumstances that the condition of 'war' negated (Jamieson, 1998). In the early years of the new millennium the coherence of this 'modernist' consensus began to break down, with the visible emergence (or resurgence) of forms of hybrid state/non-state violence particularly in the Balkans (Haagen and Greer, 2002). This has led to calls for war itself to be addressed by criminologists in a similar manner to corporate and state crimes (Ruggiero, 2009). Thus, as scholars across a number of disciplines have turned their gaze to the transformation of states and conflicts, the theoretical praxis of private security studies has begun to emerge.

In more recent years, with the acceleration of interconnected networks of global communication and commerce, security has become increasingly de-coupled from the traditional constraints of modern nationhood (Cowan, 2014:10). As the 'oil-shocks of the 1970s' accelerated the push for an expansion of the extractive industries into areas of political instability (Abrahamsen and Leander 2016:2), neoliberal financial reforms and the end of Cold War caused the restructure and depletion of traditional state provision in all its forms. Simultaneously military technological advancement accelerated as state funding of standing armies reduced (Krahmann, 2010a). Through these transitions the stage was set for private security and military activity to (re)emerge into the public realm. With this has come concerns that a traditional social order that held private actors as peripheral or subordinate to state authorities in matters of security was being overturned (Livingstone and Hart, 2003, Jones and Newburn, 1998). In turn, this engendered a divergence between the way in which private security actors, many of whom are former employees of state military, policing and security agencies, saw themselves, and the way in which they were portrayed in public discourse and media. (Kruck and Spenser, 2013). This tension exists at a number of levels, political, legal, practical and theoretical, and forms the territory of many contemporary debates on private security.

Private Security and Ethics

Many of the tensions engendered by the (re)emergence of private force in society are ethical in nature. In the literature, there are three broad positions (Alexandra, Baker and Caparini 2008:1-2). On one end of the spectrum are those who consider that the private provision of forms of security previously considered the sole responsibility of the state, does not itself generate an insurmountable ethical conflict. This literature sees the ethical challenges of private security as 'merely apparent' (ibid:1), that the fictive nature of the state's monopoly over the use-of force in society meant that, substantively, it mattered little whether coercion was enacted by the state, or on its behalf by private actors (Frost, 2006:43-55). A middle ground of ethical opinion sees the conflict between the public and private as real, but potentially resolvable as social attitudes towards security change. Finally, there are those who consider the conflict to be enduring; that tight regulation of the private use-of-force, with the restriction, or even prohibition of many types of private security and military activity, is the only sustainable outcome to the challenge that the industry poses to the coherence of national sovereign integrity. At their heart these ethical positions rest on the extent to which observers see the state as uniquely virtuous, and the act of challenging or restructuring the state's perceived monopoly over the legitimate use of force as innovative or transgressive.

Critical scholars have erred towards a position that sees private military security as inherently un-ethical, operating within a 'terrain of unaccountability' (Rothe and Ross, 2010) that makes the industry uniquely susceptible to transgressive and harmful practice (Loader and Walker, 2007; Rothe, 2006; Rothe and Mullins, 2011; Leander, 2010) and that renders it fundamentally illegitimate in its conduct (Hall and Bierstecker, 2002). At the other end of the spectrum functionalist scholars hold that private military security provides practical answers to the moral problems created by the complexities of international politics (Shearer, 1998; Brooks and Chorev, 2008:116-130). Increasingly, the literature of private security ethics appears to be moving towards a synthesis; Baker and Pattison (2012) make a 'principled case' for the use of private military companies in humanitarian crises and Carmola proposes that private military security has

adopted 'frontier ethics with a cosmopolitan goal' (2010:133-154) with the implication that ostensibly un-ethical means may achieve ethical aims. McFate (2016a:65) analyses state and private security actions through an increasingly symmetric ethical paradigm, proposing that in Iraq both state and private armed groups have demonstrated a similar capacity for wrongdoing and excessive force. Brauer (2008) focuses on function, arguing that 'at issue is not how a force is organised (public or private), but how organized the force is'. This thesis takes these concepts forward by directly exploring how military identities, created in the service of the state, manifest in the commercial market for force and what this tells us about both state and privatised forms of coercive violence and control.

This landscape of contested definitions, tension between public perceptions and industry self-image, and fault-lines in perceived ethics and legitimacy, serves to illustrate that private security is a field of both contestation and arbitration. While functionalist theories of private security emphasise the importance of state executives as the 'principal' actors determining the sector's development (Cockayne, 2007), in this thesis I propose that industry practitioners are not passive participants in this process. There is mounting evidence that practitioners shape the way in which the sector, and the security challenges with which it is engaged, are perceived and understood (Leander 2005; Berndtsson, 2012; Joachim and Schneiker, 2012b). Leander talks of the 'epistemic' power of the private security actor to define the nature of, and solution to, security problems (Leander, 2005:805). Both Cutler (2010) and Krahmman (2012) have observed the effect that practitioners' subjective understandings of their work and identity has on the projection of legitimacy surrounding their actions. Cutler's work in particular shows the extent to which the narratives of private security 'experts' act to legitimise private forms of governance. As such, the manner in which security practitioners understand the world of their work (Franke and von Boemcken, 2011), the modes of discourse they use (Berndtsson, 2012; Higate, 2012a; Joachim and Schneiker, 2012a) and the 'social construction' of their role (Krahmann, 2012:347) influence the trajectory and evolution of the sector.

Practitioners' understanding of their work was not created solely by their experience in private security. As the centrality of military experience emerged in

the narratives of my interviewees, so the literature of civil military relations (and military sociology in particular) became foundational to my understanding of the effect that military identity had on the practices of private security. Similarly, as evidence emerged that military private security companies were involved in activities that closely resembled domestic policing, so the literature of policing and private policing became seminal. It is to these that I now turn before recapping current theories in private security studies.

Military Culture: Within or Beyond Society?

This research substantively links the practice, structure and evolution of private military security with the identity of the soldier, created in the service of the state and brought forward into the realm of commercial security. Here the literature of civil military relations provides a starting point for examining and understanding the people and organisations charged with the application of military force. Caforio (2003) notes that this tradition has its roots in the philosophical and historical works that informed the modern understanding of the nature of the military in society – Tocqueville (1990a and b), Liebknecht (1907), Vagts (1959) and Jaurès (1916) - and has spawned two areas of intellectual endeavour: conflict and security studies (e.g. Allison, 1971, Betts, 1977, 1999 in Caforio 2003) and military sociology. The latter examines control over the use-of-force in society by military organisations, and provides a foundational paradigm for interpreting the identity of the soldier, and the extent to which their violence is integrated with referent social values. This, in turn, determines the manner in which privatisation affects the ‘integration of violence’ with referent social values in the private realm (Avant 2005:43).

Sociologists have long been concerned with the relationship between society and those using force as part of society’s ordering process. The sociology of the military emerged as a by-product of the attempt, initially by American scholars, to improve military effectiveness and define the role of the military in a changing post-war society (Caforio, 2003:65). This body of work has become known as the ‘functionalist paradigm’ (Ouellet, 2005:8) or the ‘American School’ (Caforio, 2003:15) of military sociology. These core works date back to the 1950s and 1960s and were produced by sociologists working within military and

government organisations, such as the US Rand Corporation (Janowitz, 1960, 1971, 1975; Huntingdon, 1957; Finer, 1962; Stouffer, 1949). The focus of this early research was the relationship between the state and its military, and reflected the concerns of an establishment struggling with the transition from the citizen armies of the Second World War to the post-war model of the smaller professional military. Within this school, an understanding of the military 'self' had been explored through two dominant paradigms: The first, focussing on the conceptualisation of the role and identity of (initially) officers within the armed forces based upon their exposure to different operational practices; the second addressing the nature of the military institution itself and, by extension, the effect of military service on individual and collective identity.

Huntingdon in his work *'the Soldier and the State'* (1957) was the first modern scholar to define the military officer corps as a 'profession'². He proposed that military officers represented a separate societal 'caste' responsible for the commission of specific acts that fell outside the societal norm; the 'direction, operation and control of an organisation whose primary function is the application of violence' (Caforio, 2003:16). This professional class was defined by its overarching purpose (the effective destruction of the enemies of the state) and was possessed of a collective identity, a 'warrior culture', deliberately distinct from civilian cultural values (Huntingdon, 1957; 1963). This view came to define one side of sociological debate on the nature of the military. The political theorist Finer (1962) was later to develop and refine Huntingdon's argument. He emphasised both the 'separateness' of the military and the necessity that it be fully controlled by civilian authorities, lest it become a danger to the state that it purported to protect. Thus, Finer argued, an effective military was one that, while separate from the society it protected, was politically subordinate to civilian control.

Maurice Janowitz, a sociologist with a grounding in both American pragmatism (Dewey, 1909) and in the Chicago School of sociological research, demurred from

² Huntingdon argues that the activity of state military officers should be considered a 'profession' due to the characteristics of 'expertise, responsibility and corporateness' (summarized in Caforio, 1998a:15) that distinguish this area of military activity from the purely 'occupational'.

Huntingdon's liberal view. He argued that the efficacy of the military was a function of the extent to which its values were representative of the values of civil society. This view was grounded in a republican political ideology, but rejected the grand institutional approach proposed by Huntington (Janowitz, 1960). Through his understanding of Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism, Janowitz recognised the reflexive manner in which social systems developed and affected one another. He proposed that an effective military was one that was socially aligned to its parent society's expectations regarding the legitimate use-of-force. Through his analysis of a large group of elite military officers³, Janowitz proposed a convergence between the civil and military spheres. He considered that demographic changes in military recruitment increased the extent to which the military reflected civil society. This dynamic, coupled with the increasingly technological nature of warfare, led to a 'managerialism' that, by the 1980s was showing signs of having civilianised the military establishment.

Janowitz's conception of the military, and the military person, was defined by his recognition of the changing nature of the military role after the Second World War and the challenge that this posed to traditional military values and identity. In *The Professional Soldier* (1960) he identified the increasingly 'constabulary' nature of military operations and proposed that the growing engagement of the military in non war-fighting activity necessitated a departure from traditional military values⁴ (activity he defined in his work as Operations Other Than War, or OOTW). Caforio describes this transition as a form of 'professional identity crisis' (Caforio, 2003) for the military, noting the low regard in which the American military held constabulary activity. Importantly, Janowitz made the distinction between military personnel who retained traditional military values, based on the historic 'warrior' identity, and those for whom accommodating the 'constabulary concept' created a new type of professional identity better oriented to the complex

³ Janowitz surveyed 760 United States military generals and admirals and 576 military officers from the Pentagon destined for senior positions in military decision-making. Additionally, he conducted interviews over one hundred high-level officers.

⁴ Caforio summarises the character of the new 'constabulary force' described by Janowitz as one in which the military was maintained in circumstances of continual preparedness to act, as opposed to continual engagement in action, and where the organisation was oriented to the use of minimum force to achieve the aims of international relations, rather than the destruction of the enemies of the state to achieve a 'victorious' outcome (Caforio, 2003:67)

challenges of peacekeeping and increasingly convergent with the values of the parent society⁵

Typology: Warrior and Peacekeeper

Warrior	Peacekeeper
Discipline	Determination
To be fit for action	Empathy
Decisiveness	Expertise
Leadership	Ability to easily make friends
Obedience	Cooperativeness
Ability to undergo physical stress	Mental Strength
Patriotism	General Education
Readiness to Make Sacrifices	Open-mindedness
Loyalty to Civil Power	Taking responsibility
OOTW and NOT a natural part of the military's role	OOTW are a natural part of the military's role

(Reproduced from Caforio 2003:75)

The concept of the civilianisation of the United States military was taken forward by Charles Moskos, a professor of sociology at Northwestern University, a former combat engineer and a consummate US military ‘insider’⁶. Moskos explored the extent to which the adoption of civilian practices in the US military had led to a convergence with civilian values. Through an examination of a range of factors including free market recruitment and the modification of military practice to ensure the retention of labour, Moskos developed the civilian ‘occupation’ and military ‘institution’ paradigm for understanding the unique character of military service. He proposed that the post-war military establishment was adopting a more ‘occupational’ character. In his examination of the ‘postmodern military’ Moskos (2000:21) highlighted an increased reliance on civilian contractors as contributing to this trend. However, more recently scholars of strategic studies have argued that advances in military technology and the decline of the mass military conscription of the modern era (Krahmann 2010a:9) have not unambiguously resulted in a ‘civilianisation’ of the military ethic. Instead the

⁵ Larson (1974:57) juxtaposes Huntington and Janowitz’s approach stating ‘Huntingdon Proposed apolitically neutral profession, isolated from society and concerned with the efficient achievement of victory without regard to non-military considerations. Janowitz proposed a politically sensitive profession integrated with the society and concerned with the measured use of force to achieve viable international relations.’

⁶ Moskos was responsible for the development of the ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ policy in relation to homosexuality in the US military implemented by the Clinton administration in 1993.

‘professionalisation’ of military service has reinforced its cultural ‘otherness’. At the same time the privatisation of functions previously carried out by the military has served to ‘militarise’ civil society with little corresponding ‘civilianisation’ of the military (Cohen, 1985; 2010).

Typology: Institutional and Occupational

Military Social Organization: Institutional vs. Occupational		
Variable	Institutional	Occupational
Legitimacy	normative values	marketplace economy
Role commitments	diffuse	specific
Basis of compensation	rand and seniority	skill level and manpower
Mode of compensation	much in non-cash form or deferred	salary and bonuse
Level of compensation	decompressed; low recruit pay	compressed; high recruit pay
Residence	adjacency of work and residence locales	separation of work and residence locales
Spouse	integral part of military community	removed from military community
Societal regard	esteem based on notion of service	prestige based on level of compensation
Reference groups	“vertical”—within organization	“horizontal”—external to organization
Evaluation of performance	holistic and qualitative	segmented and quantitative
Legal System	military justice	civilian jurisprudence
Postservic status	veteran’s benefits and preference	same as civilian

(Reproduced from Moskos, 1986:78)

The British Context

The British military has experienced a similar challenge to traditional notions of military identity as that of their US counterparts. The Cold War saw a decline in the commitment of the British Army to active war-fighting operations. The uneasy standoff between the Warsaw Pact and NATO meant that, while war-fighting capability was maintained through exercises and training, it was rarely put into practice. The geopolitical constraints of the Cold War saw the military’s active operational role re-orient towards peacekeeping, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations (especially in Northern Ireland). By the 1980s this trend was sufficiently embedded to require incorporation into formal military doctrine. This was achieved through the conceptualisation of Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW) that encompassed, peacekeeping, military aid to civil

powers (MACP) and peace support operations (PSO). These new types of operations were formally incorporated into British military practice in the 'Dobbie Doctrine' in 1994 (Dobbie, 1994)⁷. This institutional re-orientation was indicative of the fact that, while there were clearly differences in the experience and culture of military organisations, the United Kingdom faced a similar process of transition to that witnessed by Janowitz in the United States.

As the Cold War ended and the British Armed forces emerged into the era of the 'peace dividend', conventional war looked to be a declining military priority. However, with the re-emergence of geopolitical instability in the post-Cold War era, 'constabulary' missions assumed a new importance for the military. The armed forces increasingly found themselves responsible for the governance of post-conflict environments in successive eras of 'humanitarian intervention' and 'regime change'. Thus a range of low-intensity military action, incorporating the mission types identified by Dobbie, and including a wide range of operations short of full scale conventional war-fighting, were encompassed under the umbrella of 'Stability and Support Operations'. The conduct of this type of operation has become central to the development of private military security.

The tension between traditional 'warrior' cultures and the contemporary trend towards more complex constabulary operations has been reflected in scholarship (Reed and Segal, 2000). In their study of European Armies, Caforio and Nuciari (1994) look beyond traditional warrior and peacekeeper identities to propose the existence of third category; that of the 'flexible officer'. This new identity describes a military professional who displays elements of both the warrior and peacekeeper orientations. Simultaneously this literature provides us with evidence that repositories of 'warrior' culture continue to exist within the broader military organisation, particularly within elite, combat oriented sub-units (Thomas and Rosenzweig, 1982; Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). This work demonstrates the manner in which an army's operational orientation is reproduced in the subjective construction of the professional self among its members. Thus, the tension at the heart of ethical concerns over the potential for

⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Charles Dobbie was an Intelligence Corps and Special Forces officer who served as a staff officer with the Inspectorate General of Doctrine and Training.

disproportionate and counterproductive applications of force in private military security could be seen to exist also within the state organisations from which the private sector recruits.

The Changing Nature of Conflict

As the nature of the military organisation has been the subject of scholarship, so the nature of conflict itself has been the focus of much academic research, particularly in the field of international relations and conflict studies. Mary Kaldor (2012) illustrates what she considers to be a paradigm shift in the way conflict has been enacted in society throughout the post Cold War era. Echoing Von Clausewitz (1908), Kaldor demonstrates that war is an activity situated in the social sphere, and that the modern understanding of warfare is a social construction that has its roots in the establishment of the nation-state. Within this context, as political distinctions were drawn between the civil and the military, the domestic and the international, the private and the public, a new societal consensus was reached on the 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' exercise of violence in society. In so doing the social construction of legitimate external conflict, that which we now know as 'war', was constituted. Concurrently, notions of the legitimate management of internal conflict within the polity of the nation-state led to the formation of the first modern police forces. Thus, both internally and externally, a social construction of legitimate and illegitimate violence was created with the symbolic sovereignty of the state at its heart, and the state's monopoly over the exercise of legitimate violence its defining and pervasive incantation.

The power of the modernist construction of legitimate violence is undeniable. The modern era has seen nation states able to legitimise types of industrialised violence unthinkable in previous eras (Arendt, 1966; Rothe and Mullins, 2011; Tilly, 1985). Despite this, Kaldor argues, a new type of conflict has emerged that differs in nature from the conflicts of the modern industrial era. She articulates the notion of 'new wars' observing that these conflicts occur in situations where state revenues decline, usually as a result of the decline of the national economy under the pressures of globalisation; that this decline is accompanied by the spread of criminality, corruption and inefficiency. In turn, this incentivises the privatisation of violence in response to organised criminality, and sees the

emergence of paramilitary structures that challenge and diminish the legitimacy of the state. Under these circumstances traditional distinctions between 'external barbarity' and 'domestic civility'; between the combatant as a legitimate bearer of arms and the non-combatant; between the soldier, the police and the criminal, all begin to break down. Kaldor's hypothesis is that, while the barbarity of war between states may have become a thing of the past, in its place 'a new type of organised violence that is more pervasive and long-lasting, but also perhaps less extreme' (Kaldor, 2012:6) has emerged. Wulf (2008) highlights the central ethical question that the involvement of private security companies in these conflicts presents; what is the effect of private force on conflict itself? Do private forces, through the pursuit of economic incentives, risks-aversion or indiscipline have the potential to prolong or exacerbate conflict where their state counterparts would not?

Kaldor has her critics who suggest that there are no fundamental characteristics in the 'new wars' that differ from those in evidence in historical conflicts (Kalyvas, 2001 and Smith, 2003). Despite this, there remains a considerable scholarly consensus that the nature of conflict has changed in fundamental ways since the end of the Cold War (see also Van Creveld, 1991; Held 1995 and Grey, 1997). The blurring of the delineation between war and crime is reflected in a convergence of the previously distinct literatures of criminology, international relations and conflict studies (Loader and Percy, 2012 and Walklate and McGary, 2015). Additionally, a new literature that deals with the increasing militarisation of policing is indicative of the 'hybridisation' of conflict discussed by Kaldor. This literature encompasses the increasing use of soldiers as police officers in military 'stability support' operations and counter-insurgencies abroad (Campbell and Campbell, 2010). In the United States in particular, the increasing 'militarisation' of domestic policing has become a focus of scholastic attention (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997; Kraska, 2001, McCulloch, 2004, Beede, 2008). These studies provide us with an insight into the powerful impact that the social construction of 'military elitism' can have on the culture of civil policing organisations (Campbell and Campbell, 2010).

Thus, the genesis of the complex operations that have so challenged the traditional

'warrior' identity of the soldier, resides in the response to new forms of conflict that have emerged since the end of the Second World War. These changes can be seen, at least in part, as a result of the same forces that have created the private security phenomenon. As the changing nature of global governance has altered the nature of conflict, so changes in the nature of conflict can be seen to affect the nature of governance. As Rose observes, 'Warfare, that is to say, requires and inspires the invention of new practices of government' (Rose and Miller, 2010:276). These forms of conflict confound the traditional public/private divide; blur the distinction between the domestic and the international, and between the military and the constabulary. It is to the latter (policing studies) to which I now turn.

Policing and Private Policing

Research into privatised forms of policing began in the early 1980's (Shearing and Stenning, 1981; 1983; 1987a; 1987b) and has, like civil military relations, been centrally concerned with the relationship between the emergent private practitioners of policing and the state (Shearing, 1992; Johnson, 1992). While the private origins of public policing are increasingly recognised (Kempa, 2017), the convergence between forms of public and private constabulary activity is, increasingly a focus of study (Reiner, 2010). Initially scholars saw private security as a 'junior partner' to state policing (Jones and Newburn 1995; 1998). However, by the early 2000s evidence was emerging that privatised policing was creating forms of non-state government in both the public and private realms (Bayley and Shearing, 2001, Shearing, 2006:11). Scholars began to question the centrality of the state to the provision of security in society in the wake of neoliberal reforms. This gave rise to theories of 'nodal governance' (Johnston and Shearing, 2003; Shearing and Wood, 2003; Wood and Shearing, 2007) that cast private security as one of many actors, public and private, who often cooperated on an equal footing to provide the security of public or private spaces. This attempt to challenge the perceived monopoly of the state in the creation of security (White, 2011:91) was not universally accepted. Loader and Walker (2006; 2007) proposed that 'the symbolism and cultural power' of the state ensured that its influence on domestic security remained pivotal, even where the state took a less direct role in its

provision (Loader, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c). This 'anchored plural' approach proposed that deeply embedded cultural norms ensured that the same symbolism that reinforced high levels of legitimacy among public police forces actually had a negative impact on the perceived legitimacy of private security providers; the logic of the market being seen as incompatible with deeply embedded cultural concepts of legitimacy that underpinned popular attachment to public policing.

The normative legitimacy of the state (Loader and Walker, 2006), and its relation to the practices of state policing, is relevant to our understanding of private security. In particular, examination of the relative legitimacy associated with different forms of state policing provides an insight into the implications of their commoditisation. Brodeur (1983; 2005:227; 2010) casts light upon the difference between the practices of 'high and low' policing and their respective relationships with the public and the state. He characterises 'low policing' as the overt policing carried out by uniformed officers and criminal detectives oriented towards the protection of the public. In contrast, he draws from accounts of the covert activity of the continental police magistrates in revolutionary France, demonstrating that 'high policing' is possessed of both a different character and different aims:

'As part of the criminal justice system, low Police share its aim of protecting society. In contrast, the protection of the political regime is the *raison d'être* of high policing. This basic aim is sometimes expressed as the protection of the state or the protection of national security. However, the clause "protection of the political regime" is more comprehensive, as it also covers so-called "failed states," where high policing is devoted to perpetuating the imposed distribution of power, often at the expense of society' (Brodeur, 2005:226)

Brodeur (2005:809; 2010:226) proposed that modern 'high policing' was carried out by a mixture of policing and intelligence agencies; that it was characterised by the use of technique that involved secrecy and deceit, that it often operated extra-legally and blurred the 'separation of powers' that underwrites the modern democratic ideal. He posits that, in its contemporary form, high policing can be regarded as a form of private security for the state (2010:227) with high policing agencies acting to privilege the protection of the state as a 'victim' over that of the other victims in society, be they institutions or individuals. Brodeur proposed this

as a form of 'self-privatisation' of the state, by the state. This can be seen to have both driven the privatisation of state military and security functions, and to have been reinforced by the autonomy from democratic accountability that privatisation has provided.

Scholars of conflict and private security studies have evidenced the ways in which 'high policing' functions have become the preserve of both police and military organisations (Kaldor, 2012 and Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011). In Britain military involvement in law enforcement became commonplace throughout the period of 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland (Urban, 1992; Punch, 2012). This commitment involved military activity that replicated the 'high' and 'low' policing distinction described by Brodeur. The British Army retained its own identification in slang for military units that became engaged in covert action as part of the 'high policing' function of the state; making a distinction between the 'green army', those who operated in uniform and whose actions were subject to only such secrecy as was afforded to conventional military operations, and the 'non-green army'; the collection of Special Forces and special intelligence units who worked covertly (i.e. not wearing uniform, hence the 'non-green' denomination) and whose actions were subject to much greater levels of secrecy. It was these units that enacted the 'exceptional' actions of the British State such as the alleged 'shoot to kill' policy in Northern Ireland during the 1980s (Punch, 2012; Urban, 1992; Holroyed and Burbridge 1989) and the covert coordination of 'pseudo-gangs' of paramilitaries throughout the conflict (Kaldor, 2018:81). Thus, taking Brodeur's 'high policing' impunity from legal norms as a starting point, our understanding of the differential status of the units involved in this type of action can be expanded through the work of Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben. Schmitt created (1922), and Agamben developed (2005), the concept of the 'state of exception'; the condition sought by many sovereign states, particularly when proposing circumstances of emergency or existential threat: that of legal exemption to the law (in essence, the removal of sovereign power from legal accountability). Thus the 'high policing' or Special Forces practitioner, when operating on behalf of the state had legal recourse to the secret practice of extra-legal technique, and as such, has increasingly become the direct executor of sovereign exceptionalism.

Despite evidence of the moral ambiguity often surrounding the conduct of states, state-centric frames of analysis have remained prevalent even where scholars have grappled with evidence of the diffuse nature of state control (Loader, 1997b). Echoing Bauman (2000), in her work on the liquidity of modern forms of state and private security, Zedner lamented a lack of a coherent ethical vision in private security by contrast to a public police that, she believed, displayed a strong sense of 'integrity' and 'public duty'. Simultaneously Zedner comments that the 'security product on sale by the private sector is quite other than that offered by the state' (Zedner, 2006:269). Through this Zedner highlights the complexities that the different aims and outcomes of public and private policing produce, and the manner in which these map on to security definitions and security identities. Indeed, while academics have gone some way to explore the nature and character of state policing (Foster, 2003; 2008), the lived experience of private security staff in the domestic field remains relatively underexplored. The small number of studies that directly examine the experiences and perception of actors in this sector (Jones and Newburn, 1998; Wakefield, 2003; 2008; Hobbs, 1988; 2005) have not provided evidence that the relationship with the state, or comparisons with state police, are particularly relevant to their day-to-day conduct. Indeed, Mopasa and Stenning (2001) have highlighted that the relative paucity of 'symbolic power' (Bourdieu, 1991) possessed by private security actors meant that they had to develop very different approaches to achieving public compliance to those of their state counterparts.

More recently scholars of private policing have begun to draw increasingly nuanced distinctions between forms of security that have sovereignty as their foundation and those that cannot rely on this underpinning. Based on Shearing and Bailey's (2001) proposition that public police and private sector actors display different 'mentalities' in the conduct of their roles, Crawford (2014) observes that local and plural forms of private ordering have always 'played a vital role in constituting security', and that developing global and transnational threats render forms of security based on national sovereignty ineffective. In this context he argues that public and private partnerships between state and commercial organisations have become not just practical, but essential. However, Crawford

observes a growing bifurcation in security practice between public policing and private security. Here the 'normative moral logic' and 'symbolic and visible sovereign authority' of public policing is contrasted with the more 'instrumental logic' of private security; the punitive, punishment-oriented proclivity of the state sitting in stark contrast to the more 'proactive/preventative' and 'problem solving' orientation of private practitioners (Crawford, 2017). While Crawford recognises the inequities that private security can produce (Crawford, 2014:4), he draws a clear distinction between the nature of 'security' as it is created through sovereign practices and those that rely of other forms of legitimacy. Gill (2015) notes the tension this can create between state and private actors, with senior police officers often conflicted as to whether to cooperate or compete with private security companies operating in their areas. Thus, while critical scholarship orients around the idea that security without the assumed moral legitimacy of affiliation to the state is ethically deficient, a developing functionalist approach presents this absence of moral certitude as appropriate to the creation of a different kind of security, more local, instrumental and less essentialist in its logic.

Taxonomies of Private Security

As the field of private security studies has coalesced, so a number of theoretical positions have emerged to explain the nature and causes of the contemporary private security phenomenon (Avant, 2005:30–38; Binder, 2007; Rosen, 2008; Singer, 2003; Deitelhoff, 2010; Krahmman, 2010a; Petersohn, 2010, 2011a). The first of these relates to taxonomies, as the academic literature has grappled with the challenge of coherently articulating the nature and boundaries of an industry that has evolved at such a pace as to make classification difficult. Singer (2003) initially saw the sector as one in which practitioners were defined by their involvement in either 'front-line' or support activities. Chesterman and Lehnardt (2007) similarly proposed potential engagement in the use of lethal force as a paradigm through which the structure of the sector and its participants could be understood, and added a geographical dimension; whether the service was enacted inside or outside the home-state jurisdiction. Kinsey (2006) saw the nature of the private security company's clients as key to the sector's construction, differentiating between companies that catered to state or commercial clients.

Bearpark and Schulz (2007) proposed that the sector should be understood through its involvement in five functional areas of activity, traditional security, post conflict reconstruction, state building, humanitarian disaster relief and development; while Hakala (2010) developed a separate typology for the security industry based on a 'family tree' of security services that includes a list of discrete operational categories such as 'security consultancy', 'private investigation' 'crowd management' and 'guarding'. He includes 'private military services' as a separate operational branch. However, as I will demonstrate, in both theory and practice the 'branches' of Hakala's tree are somewhat more intertwined than the typology of his thesis might imply.

More recently, scholarship has begun to focus on the character and practice inherent to different 'disciplines' of private security (see O'Reilly, 2010; Cusumano and Kinsey, 2016 on consultancy and diplomatic security). Perhaps most notably Berndtsson (2012) has endeavoured to view the sector through the prism of the expertise that companies construct and present as the competences (or 'capital') they propose to trade. Through this it is possible to interpret the extent to which forms of experience shape the structure of the sector; a dynamic recognised by Abrahamson and Williams (2011) and Williams (2016) in their proposal that security constitutes itself through 'assemblages' of actors whose expertise allows security challenges to be addressed irrespective of restrictive traditional boundaries. This changing and self-constituting conception of the sector marries structure and competence in a manner that is more satisfactory than other more traditional typologies, and aligns with the 'protean' moniker afforded the sector by Carmola (2010).

One persistent definitional dispute relates to the categorisation of private military security practitioners as 'mercenaries' (Brewis and Godfrey, 2018). This addresses a number of ethical concerns including: the alignment of coercive force with the motivation of financial profit (Steinhoff, 2008), changes to the relationship between the civil polity and the state military (Wolfendale, 2008), and potential changes to the nature and ethics of conflict and military organisation (Runzo, 2008; Kasher, 2008). Perhaps most pronounced is the concern that, without the political control imposed over state military forces, 'mercenary'

organisations may be used to enact political change (Musah and Fayemi, 2000; Musah, 2002; Francis, 1999). This perceived lack of control is seen, perhaps paradoxically, to result in both a propensity for un-restrained aggression and a 'lack of fighting spirit' (Von Clausewitz, 1908). Indeed Machiavelli notes the inclination displayed by 16th Century Condottieri for fighting 'sham' or 'bloodless' battles when pitted against other mercenary companies; an interesting if antiquated example of the fact that the profit motive often sits uneasily with the destructive essentialism of state conflict (Machiavelli cited in Carmola, 2010:14).

Despite adoption by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UN, 2011), the use of the term mercenary to categorise private military security companies has been problematised by functionalist scholars (Cleaver, 2000; Baker, 2008) and is a label from which practitioners have sought to distance themselves (Gómez Del Prado, 2011:40), often against fierce opposition (see for example the dispute between Brooks and Fainaru in Carmola, 2010:13). The development of military companies with a recognisable corporate structure has, in the view of Percy (2007), served to narrow the scope of private military activity that carries with it the pejorative moniker of 'mercenary' without necessarily constraining the damaging consequences of their conduct. The construction of 'mercenary' activity remains a fault-line between ethical perceptions of legitimate and illegitimate commercial military activity, and has been the overwhelming focus of transnational policy makers in particular (UN, 1990).

Abrahamsen and Williams (2011) have problematised the policy (and scholarly) focus on the visible military manifestations of private military force in conflict environments. Drawing together an analysis of private security that encompasses both its specialised militarised form and what they call the 'commercial, non-military dimension' (ibid:23), they argue that a narrow view of private security through analysis of the more militarised examples, leads to an understanding of the sector as operating predominantly without legitimate authority and beyond state control (what they call the 'Mercenary Misconception' ibid:23). Instead they draw attention to the symbiotic relationship between the new private security and the structures of states and international organisations. They argue that the phenomenon of private security must be viewed more broadly, situating debate in

the milieu of 'transformations of global governance' rather than the important, but narrower concerns of control and legitimacy.

Several different taxonomies have been developed to sculpt these arguments into a common framework, and better structure our understanding of the private security field (Carmola, 2010:18). Of these Kruck's is the least unwieldy (Kruck, 2014)⁸. He identifies three dominant theoretical paradigms that have emerged in Private Security Studies. These align broadly with what Carmola sees as the 'origin' stories of the private military security industry, and each provides a frame of analysis through which the identity of the contemporary private security practitioner can be viewed, and the nature of the industry interpreted.

Functionalist Theory

Kruck (2014:115) describes functionalism as stemming from the development of a form of private 'problem-driven privatisation'. This has emerged as state actors have sought to find economically effective means to competently deliver military and security capability where state capacity has been reduced through budgetary restrictions. This theory first assumes the perceived superior 'cost-efficiency' of the private provider and secondly its greater efficacy by comparisons to the state functions it replaces (Kruck, 2014:115; Petersohn, 2010). To wit, that technological advances, the increasing complexity of modern hybrid warfare, and the transition from 'old' to 'new wars', has meant that traditional state military organisations compare unfavourably to private providers of force when it comes to their flexibility and deployability (Shearer, 1998). For example, the relative geographical autonomy of private security allows foreign-policy makers to influence regions beyond the practical reach of state forces (Lehnardt, 2007).

Functionalism produces two versions of the private security actor, the first casts the practitioner in a relatively passive role, responding to geopolitical circumstance and the strategies of state bureaucrats. This emphasises 'pull' factors that have served to draw a generation of demobilized service people into private military security work as states, anticipating an end to the 'hyper-militarization' of the Cold War downsized their armed forces (Lock, 1998 in

⁸ Albeit a framework that Kruck seeks to challenge.

Carmola, 2010:42). However, while states reduced their capacity for overseas military engagement non-state bodies began to adopt responsibility for operations to implement security sector reform in territories emerging from Cold War conflict or isolation (Kinsey, 2006:51 and Carmola 2010). In identifying the push for states to find more flexible and effective responses to changing forms of conflict, the foundation of much functionalist theory is the idea that there has been a fundamental change to the nature of conflict during the closing years of the 20th Century. In turn this has produced a strain of ethical functionalism that laments the failure of ‘western’⁹ nations to engage effectively with the private providers of force in circumstances where such engagement could ameliorate humanitarian crisis (Brooks and Chorev, 2008:116-130; Avant, 2005:61). This strain of functionalism casts the private practitioner in the more active, albeit highly contested, ‘true professional’ or ‘ethical hero warrior’ role (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012a); as rational actors redressing the inefficiencies of an increasingly dysfunctional global order through market mechanisms.

Ideational Theory

Ideational theory (Kruck, 2014: 118) links the development of privatised military and security activity to the evolution of market based, neoliberal ideology. Through this prism, private security has developed in a space where the orthodox logic of the state monopoly over security is challenged by a market-led, pluralistic approach (Carmola, 2010:50; Singer, 2003, Avant, 2005 and Stanger, 2009). Like functionalists, proponents of this theory propose the superiority of market forces over state provision, but unlike functionalism sees this belief as ideologically, rather than empirically created. Ideational theory sees private security practitioners as actively engaged in the national and transnational proliferation of neoliberal economic and governance practices (Cutler, 2010; Krahmman, 2010a and 2010b; Petersohn, 2010; 2011a; 2015; Walker and Whyte, 2005). Baum and McGahan (2009) interpret this ideological alignment with neoliberalism as an almost ‘conditioned’ response to increases in privatisation, while others

⁹ Van Meegdenburg (2015:322) problematizes the uncritical use of the category ‘western’ in private security literature. I use the term throughout this thesis chiefly due to its ubiquity in practitioner discourse, while recognising its use is contested.

(Fredland, 2004; Berndtsson, 2012) interpret these beliefs as nested in a more fundamental ideological commitment to the efficiency of market mechanisms.

Ideational theories emphasise the active nature of the private security practitioner as an advocate of neoliberal ideology. In their work on Darfur Leander and van Munster (2007) observed how private security actors simultaneously depoliticised and instrumentalised security discourses to bolster the legitimacy of market-based solutions, demonstrating their importance as incubators of neoliberal governmentality (Rose and Miller 2010:272 on Foucault 1979), both germinating and cultivating, 'state-like' thinking among private companies, NGOs and transnational organisations. This trend can be seen to have influenced the culture and practice of these organisations, and altered their traditional relationship with the state and other groups in society. Critics of ideational theory argue that ideational factors alone cannot explain the differing character of private security in countries with a similar ideological foundation (Cusumano and Kinsey, 2015:593). Nonetheless, even these critics accept that neoliberal privatisation has challenged state hierarchies and redistributed power and resources among actors within the executive branch, with one effect of this having been to allow military aspects of foreign policy to be conducted independently of state military structures (Cusumano and Kinsey, 2015:595).

Political Instrumentalist

Political instrumentalist theory (Kruck, 2014: 116), described by Carmola as the 'nasty' private security origin story (Carmola, 2010:48), encompasses many of the more critical strains of private security studies (Leander, 2016). This approach views the emergence of private security as the result of public officials' desire to obviate political accountability rather than to increase efficiency per-se (Chesterman and Lehnardt, 2007; Avant and Sigelman, 2010), creating greater freedom for governments to operate without scrutiny or legislative oversight (Cockayne, 2007; de Nevers, 2016:173, O'Reilly, 2010). In so doing these officials willfully alter the traditional relationships between constituent elements of the state's apparatus and the processes that generate policy (Avant 2005:59-60). A significant concern of political instrumentalist theory has been the effect that the creation of private markets-for-force has had on the conduct of foreign policy

(Avant, 2005:68; de Nevers, 2016). Research in this area has focused on the role of private security companies in security sector reform (SSR) in post-conflict environments (McFate, 2016b; Kinsey, 2005; 2006: 122-127 and Avant and de Nevers, 2011) and the manner in which the 'hollowing out' of the state ultimately inhibits its ability to enact its own foreign policy, by surrendering many of its policy decisions to private actors (Avant, 2005;176).

In some cases the use of private security entities to achieve foreign policy objectives has resulted in considerable backlash (see Singer, 2003:115 on the 'Sandline Affaire' of 1997) and, as such, political instrumentalist concerns have underpinned a strong vein of critical scholarship. This scholarship tends to view the private security actor as unthinking or unprincipled, and focuses on the extent to which the privatisation of military and security activity challenges or reproduces social hierarchies. Here questions of the relationships and 'revolving doors' between military, intelligence organisations, civil society groups and private military security companies have become the focus (Leander, 2016b:89; Cowan, 2014; Joachim and Schneiker, 2012b). Cowan emphasizes the extent to which military disciplines now form the core management practice of international logistics. This perpetuates a global 'logic of conflict' by situating international logistics within a 'trajectory of struggle' which has 'entwined' military and civilian business practice (Cowan, 2014:5-6). Critical literature has demonstrated the relative impunity afforded to private military security companies by existing regimes of self-regulation; Leander's examination of 'Codes of Conduct' (2012) and 'Whitelisting' (2016a) both show the extent to which these informal systems simultaneously produce 'both regulation and militarization' (Leander, 2016b:91). Thus, in critical literature the morally disengaged practitioner is seen to willfully suborn civil and legal safeguards, and harm the civilian ecosystems with which they interact.

Although much critical scholarship continues to explore the extent to which private military security alters or reinforces the power of states, increasingly it looks beyond public/private paradigm to examine the extent to which the commodification of security effects categories of hierarchy such as race and gender (Schulz and Yeung, 2005; 2008; Via, 2010; Joachim and Schneiker, 2012a;

Higate, 2012b, 2012c; 2012d; 2012e; Eichler, 2015; 2016; 2017; Stachowitsch, 2013; 2015a; 2015b; Chisholm and Stachowitsch, 2016; 2018; Chisholm, 2008; 2014a; 2014b; Bulmer and Eichler, 2017; Chisholm and Eichler, 2018;). Like others, this literature can be seen to have its origins in study of state actors, particularly the impact of military masculinities on state peacekeeping operations. Here scholars have observed how the traditional masculinity of military culture has had to adapt to the new humanitarian missions that the military were undertaking (Enloe, 1993; Whitworth, 2003; Tickner 2001, Duncanson, 2009; Duncanson and Woodward, 2016). Together this has produced a substantial literature on military and security identities, which I explore, and develop, throughout this thesis.

A Note on Bourdieu

In this thesis I have made considerable use of the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The work of this thesis has, by necessity, been based predominantly on interviews rather than ethnographic observation and has focussed on a social constructionist analysis of these recalled accounts. Despite these methodological differences, the vocabulary of Bourdieusian theory has provided a framework through which it has been possible to theorise a 'practitioners' eye view' of private military security, the topology of the field, and the boundaries of behaviour that have determined its logic and practice over time. In this I make no claim to advance Bourdieusian theory, but aim only to supplement the work of scholars such as Abrahamson and Williams (2011), Diphorn and Grassiani (2016), Bowden (2019), Cooper at al. (2017) and White (2018) who have begun to apply Bourdieu's theories to security and military transition.

Thesis Structure

Having discussed the literature that underpins my research (Chapter 1), I continue by outlining the methodology used to conduct the study (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 provides an overview of the contemporary UK military private security sector through the eyes of actors within the sector. I describe its history and activities: its inception in the close networks of ex-Special Forces veterans of the Cold War

era, and its evolution into the 'corporate' structures of the Global War on Terror. Here also I introduce the cohering logic of the 'field' and establish the centrality of certain forms of military experience to its constitution. Chapter 4 examines the foundations of military identity, created in state service and taken through into the private security field, with particular reference to the culture and identity of 'high policing' or non-green army units. Chapter 5 explores the experience of transition between military service and the private security sector, proposing a number of different trajectories and experiences that accompany the move from state service to the commercial realm. Chapters 6 to 8 examine the experience of my interviewees in different areas of private military security, starting with the 'mainstream' market of armed protective security in the Middle East and the growth of the maritime security field. I then examine two areas of the private military security field identified by my interviewees as being the 'frontiers', or 'fringes' of the sector; the areas where norms and practices were most emergent or ambiguous. The first of these is the sphere of international commercial offensive military operations and training (Chapter 7) and the second the world of covert surveillance, enacted (predominantly) in the more advanced centers of global capitalism (Chapter 8). I draw together the key findings in Chapter 9, proposing how the experiences of my interviewees can further our understanding of both private and state forms of violence and control, and the implications this has for our more fundamental understanding of the nature of security and sovereignty in society.

Chapter 2 Methodology

The research discussed in this thesis grew out of my own experiences working in private military security during the late 1990s and early 2000s, a period when the industry saw considerable change and expansion. Like many of my interviewees I began my working life by joining the British Army, specifically the infantry, and had been selected for officer training and commissioned at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. In this role I was part of the 'green army'¹⁰, engaged in the provision of a recognised type of organized violence on behalf of the state. As the Cold War ended I, like many colleagues, became involved in the conflicts that resulted from this geopolitical upheaval. This new complexity in international relations provided opportunities for me and I spent the latter part of my career involved in military human intelligence. The diverse nature of this unconventional military role exposed me to the habitus of covert military operations and brought me into contact with a range of military, police, security and civilian actors; relationships that subsequently provided the foundation for my own transition into private security.

In the late 1990s I left the regular¹¹ British Army and began working for a number of private security and Non Governmental Organisations involved in the provision of military and security services. My work included a wide range of activity, from de-mining and explosive ordnance disposal, to business intelligence, investigations, close protection, training and security consultancy; as well as the management of the 'business' of security, the day-to day routine of winning contracts and managing organisations. Much of this work took place overseas, but a notable amount was in the United Kingdom.

By 2003 I was working in a senior regional executive position in a joint UK/US owned multinational private security firm. Over the next 4 years I had a grandstand seat on the company's decisions on its growth and development in the

¹⁰ The 'green army' is military slang for conventional military forces, as opposed to Special Forces or special intelligence.

¹¹ *Regular* denotes 'full time' service in the military rather than 'reserve' or 'territorial' service both of which are 'part time'.

wake of the declaration of the 'Global War on Terror' and the invasion of Iraq. During this period the political possibilities and commercial opportunities available to the private military security industry changed profoundly (See Chapter 3). It was misgivings about the nature and extent of those changes that led me to return to the United Kingdom and seek work in the relatively benign environment of higher education.

In 2007 I took a management position as the Head of Security at the London School of Economics. In accepting this job I moved, for the first time in my working life into an institution and environment where the majority of my colleagues were 'civilians'; people with no experience in the conduct of military, security, intelligence or policing activity on behalf of the state. This transition was profound, and gave me the opportunity to review and re-appraise my previous career. In 2011 I completed an MSc in Criminology and embarked upon a PhD and, in so doing, have been able to remove myself in a small way from the overwhelmingly 'practical' concerns of operational security risk management.

Through my engagement with academia in this new setting, I became interested in how, and why the private security sector had developed in the way in which it had, and the social implications that arose from it. I was also concerned that although nothing that I had done while working in private security had, at the time, felt deliberately dangerous or unethical, the industry of which I had been part (and the people working in it) had the capacity to be just that. As such, I had seen and thought of myself in a manner that was different from the way that others may have seen me (and the way in which I now see myself). This dissonance was exemplified by Rose and Miller's statement, that contemporary 'governmentality' is defined by relationships between individual subjectivities:

'Not who they are, but who they thought they were, what they wanted to be, the languages and norms according to which they judged themselves and were judged by others, the actions they took upon themselves and that others might take, in the light of those understandings' (Rose and Miller, 2008:7)

Thus, understanding how people in private security saw themselves, why they saw themselves in this way, and the implications of this sense-of-self, became my

focus of interest. The aim of my research became to understand who participated in private military security, why they participated in the sector, how they experienced and constructed their work and the social implications which arose from this. In this chapter I describe how I addressed these aims and the design and methodology of my study. I outline my participant sample; discuss my collection and analysis of data, theoretical ideas, and other methodological issues including ethics, reflexivity and the challenges of insider status that shaped my research.

Adopting a Qualitative Methodology

Any research aim is contingent upon the nature of the research methods used (Longhoffer et. al., 2012). An initial challenge in researching private security is that many important decisions and discourses occur under circumstances that are difficult to observe and record. For example, decisions on the use-of-force often occurred in spatially isolated circumstances (in a building or vehicle) in environments that could be socially disordered and dangerous (Avant, 2005). The forums in which decisions relating to the business of security are taken, for example marketing meetings, proposal presentations and consultancy meetings, are often equally inaccessible to researchers since they are subject to considerable confidentiality. These constraints, and the complex and developing nature of the private security industry results in few accessible records of decision making, certainly by comparison with those sometimes available to policing scholars.

Given the context above, it was clear that I could not achieve my research aims through an assessment of 'objective' factors (i.e., legal frameworks, regulatory standards, governance models) alone. I needed to understand the internal dialogue that formed the narrative of my interviewees' decision-making. If, in accordance with Janowitz (1960), Shearer (1998) and Avant (2005) I was to judge the social impact of the emerging model of privatised security through the congruence or divergence of its values with that of its referent civil society(s), I had to understand the values of the individual actors involved (Becker, 1963). This focus on the individual participants' perception of their circumstances, work and experience led naturally to an ontological position that recognised social realities as subjectively created - a social constructivist approach best articulated

by Charmaz's (2000:521) proposal that: 'people create and maintain meaningful worlds through dialectical process of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them'.

As I was concerned with establishing the nature of an emergent phenomenon, the shape and form of which was created by the participants themselves through 'discourse, account or repertoire – which represents a culturally available way of packaging experience' (Kitzinger, 2004:128 cited in Silverman, 2011:212) qualitative methods were most apposite (Creswell, 1998:17). I wanted to provide an intimate understanding of an aspect of private security through an analysis of how those working in the sector socially constructed the experience of their work. These 'social constructions' could not be arrived at through the examination of numerical data (Bryman, 2008), nor would they be volunteered by participants in a form that was complete and ready for analysis. They had to be reached through an interpretation of the narratives provided by participants (Williams, 2002) that took into account the context of the experiences they described (Holstein and Gurbrium, 2004).

My methodological choices were also influenced by a number of practical considerations. My thesis needed to be completed part-time alongside full-time employment. The ethnographic approach used by Amanda Chisholm (2008) who conducted her research in Afghanistan observing and interviewing private military contractors was not open to me. The extended fieldwork involved in this type of study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) could not be reconciled with my employment. Beyond this, the issue of access to the operations of a private security company would have presented an ethical and methodological challenge, if indeed it had been possible at all. Furthermore, a classic ethnography would have restricted my subject group to a single environment and category of operation. I was also conscious that the military and security operational environment encouraged the suppression of specific emotions, and may not have been conducive to the kind of introspective narratives I was trying to elicit. However, and as I describe below, there were elements of ethnography in my study.

Participant Sample

As the study progressed it became clear that my interviewees saw themselves as participating in a 'field' of activity that I have identified as 'private military security'. This was a social and vocational space, which they shared with other actors on the basis of their common experience (see chapters 3 and 6). As I explored this field, I sought participants who were representative of the 'mix' of actors involved in private military security across different positions and in different areas of practice. This proved challenging not least as a result of the general paucity of reliable data on the size and constitution of the UK-centric, transnational commercial security sector I was exploring. Although my insider status provided me with some insight into the breadth of the industry, it did not provide immediate access to every necessary sphere of activity. I had, for instance, never worked in the field of maritime security and had no immediate contacts in this industry area. My most immediately accessible group of potential participants worked in security consultancy. However, the nature of consultancy, an activity generally conducted by more experienced industry practitioners, and acting in many respects as a 'gateway' to other more discreet areas of industry activity, meant that through 'snowballing' and referrals it was possible to access participants involved in a wide range of practice.

The study involved 37 face-to-face interviews with 30 participants conducted between February 2013 and December 2016. A full list of interviewees, their background and employment history is at Appendix A. 26 participants were former members of military organisations (predominantly the British Army). Two of these had only Territorial Army experience. One participant had experience in the military of a commonwealth country. Four interviewees came from exclusively non-military backgrounds (civilian, police or intelligence services). Of those participants with a military background 8 had served as senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in the regular Army 22nd Special Air Service Regiment and 7 in other Special Forces or military special intelligence units. As the study developed, a mixture of military experience was sought to ensure that interviewees were not drawn from a single operational or regimental culture. Three participants had experience in the police, two in the United Kingdom and

one in a former Commonwealth country; of these one also had experience in a military Special Forces unit. Two interviewees had worked for UK security/intelligence services, and another for a Commonwealth equivalent service. With the exception of one interviewee, all had experience working as contractors or executives in United Kingdom and multinational private military security companies from the 1980s to the present day. As the study progressed, and I began to develop theoretical concepts on the basis of my data analysis, one interview was conducted with a man who had worked in a recruitment firm engaged in the selection of former military personnel for industries including the private military security industry.

All but one of the interviewees were men. Interviewees said that there were very few women active in the industry and Kate (my single woman interviewee) was the only one working in the international field¹². I was made aware of one other woman, a former army Intelligence Corps soldier, active in covert surveillance in the UK but was unable to secure an interview. Most interviewees were aged between 40 and 64, with a smaller number in their 30s (n=3). While this was broadly reflective of an industry that formed a second career for most, it may represent a skew towards more experienced participants. This was a function of the research aims (i.e. to seek interviewees with a range of experience in different sectors) and the nature of my field access (i.e. initially through peers of similar age or older).

All but one of the interviewees, including the single female interviewee, were white. The majority self-identified as British with the remainder holding South African or Commonwealth citizenship. The single BAME interviewee identified as Fijian. The involvement of former Gurkha personnel in the field of military private security has been explored in detail (Chisholm, 2014a; 2014b; Chisholm and Stachowitsch, 2016). However, I was unable to access any Gurkha participants. This may be because many Gurkhas discharged before 1997 were not given UK residency status and therefore lived abroad. Additionally my interviewees described Gurkhas active in military private security as 'a very closed community'

¹² I was able to identify one further woman working in diplomatic close protection in Iraq (Taylor, 2016:230)

(Gary) and as 'Having a bit of their own thing going on' (Andrew), indicating some distance between ex-Gurkhas and other participants in the sector. While this dynamic aligns with Chisholm's observation that Gurkhas were a 'silenced' community (2014b) within private security, this also means that my account cannot reflect their experiences directly. As a consequence issues of race and intersectionality may be less developed than in other studies designed specifically to address these themes (Chisholm, 2014a; 2014b; 2016; Chisholm and Stachowitsch, 2018). This is, in no way intended to diminish their importance.

Access

Access to private security industry actors reflected many of the same problems as that of access to law enforcement organisations (Noaks and Wincup, 2004), especially those involving practitioners drawn from elite specialist units where secrecy was an important constituent of professional culture (see Chapters 7 and 8). Further, in addressing experiences and decisions relating to the use-of-force I needed to access participants who were active, or had recently been active in armed security in high-threat environments. Gallaher (2012:59) in her work on paramilitaries in Northern Ireland noted the difficulty of gaining access to armed groups particularly where they might be perceived as socially unpopular or suspect. My previous career meant I had access to private security practitioners involved in a range of industry activity and from a variety of backgrounds. At the outset, I did not have to negotiate the suspicion of my potential interviewees (Tota, 2004), neither did I have to effect a change to my own behavior in order to enter and assimilate with the group I was studying (Wolf, 1991) or deliberately deceive my participant group to gain access (Calvey, 2000; Holdaway, 1982; Chambliss, 1975).

My initial interviewees were selected on the basis of both their accessibility and experience and then I used snowball sampling; requesting, or being offered, introductions to potential interviewees by existing participants (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Bryman 2008). This approach became more important as the study progressed, particularly in accessing people with specific experience or characteristics. Snowballing was not successful in all cases. For example, I was introduced to two interviewees who chose not to take part in the study. One

provided no explanation; the other said that the sensitivity of the topic was such that he would not cooperate with the research, as he did not know me personally. In addition to snowballing I used the referral function of the website 'LinkedIn' to contact potential participants whom I did not know personally but was aware had specific experience. Where the potential interviewee understood that I had identified them through 'insider' knowledge I received positive responses, although in all cases the participants checked my *bona fides* before agreeing to be interviewed. This was indicative of the inherent caution exercised by industry actors in disclosing details of the work they conduct and highlights both the ethically ambiguous nature of the industry and the habitus of secrecy that defines it.

Most interviews were conducted in London ($n=28$) and a small number in Hereford ($n=7$) and the Midlands ($n=2$). The London interviews were all conducted at the London School of Economics and Political Science while those outside London were conducted in private residences ($n=5$) or other locations ($n=4$) according to interviewee preference.

Data Collection

From semi-structured to open-ended interviews

A constructivist approach is 'concerned with the manner in which interview participants 'create meaning' (Silverman, 2013:182). As such, any interviewing strategy needed to enable the elicitation and capture of the participants' interpretation of their lived experience. Noaks and Wincup identify semi-structured interviews as those that involve 'some probing', 'rapport with the interviewee' and an 'understanding of the aims of the project' (Noaks and Wincup, 2004:80 cited in Silverman, 2011). My interviews were intended to elicit participants' narrative explanations of their social world (Miller and Glassner, 2004) and to encourage them to discuss their experiences. Interviews lasted between 1 and 5 hours and took the form of 'career histories'.

All interviews began with an open question inviting participants to describe their professional and personal experience in their own words without prompting by me (Bryman, 2008). The completion of this initial part of the interview varied

from 21 minutes to over 2 hours. Thereafter, I would follow up with a series of open questions that sought to draw out more information from the participant about certain aspects of their experience. I gave my interviewees freedom to answer in their own words and structure their own accounts. I also afforded considerable freedom to introduce topics or information that they considered relevant. These measures ensured, where possible, the narrative data collected reflected the participants' own constructed social world; conveyed through a logic determined by them and not me (May, 2001).

The majority of interview questions I had developed were covered with all interviewees. However, the subject areas I addressed with participants were more uniform at the beginning of the study and became more divergent as the study progressed. The practice of theoretical sampling (Charmaz and Bryant, 2011), the selection of interviewees whose experience was relevant to the theory emerging from the analysis of my data, required that I explore different topics and areas of activity with different participants as the study developed. Appendix B contains examples of the subject areas covered with interviewees and the question guides used at different stages. Some interviews transcended the bounds of the 'semi-structured' format and became more 'open ended' (Noaks and Wincup 2004). This created a more abductive discourse (Rapley 2001); the interview becoming a forum in which knowledge was co-constituted between participant and researcher. The resulting narratives are reflective of a 'deep mutual understanding' (Rapley 2001) that provided the greatest insight possible into the way that my interviewees saw their world, but that also gave rise to methodological challenges relating to reflexivity, insider status, trust and bias.

Recording of Data

The majority of interviews were audio recorded. However, 9 interviewees declined recording because of concerns about confidentiality and their employment status. These participants agreed that written notes be taken during the interview. One of these interviewees agreed to allow me to audio record a second interview having refused during the first. I also conducted three focus groups as part of my process of triangulation. These were recorded in hand written notes. All audio recordings were transcribed, either personally or through

a commercial transcription service with which I had a confidentiality agreement. Where interview data was particularly sensitive I carried out the transcription myself.

Data Limitations

All research has limitations, and there are some limitations to the data I have collected. The study deals with predominantly retrospective accounts. These are subject to the memory of the participants, who at times were recalling events up to 40 years in the past. While memory is both selective and deteriorates over time (Sudman and Bradburn, 1973), these considerations are perhaps less pertinent in my type of research as my focus was less on the 'facts' of an action or incident than on the manner in which an experience was reconstructed and given meaning by the interviewee. All of the interviewees remained active in the private security sector, or had only recently ceased to be active in the sector and it was their memory of events, the chain of their interactions (Collins, 2004) that defined the actions they would take, or had recently taken. The focus of this research was not to achieve a factual understanding of what had happened to the participants 40 years ago, but instead to understand how they interpreted these experiences and how this interpretation affected their own practice and that of the industry in which they worked.

The 'rationalisation' of motivations (Viterna, 2006) was also a factor. This was something of a 'double edged' phenomenon. While rationalisation could cloud the determination of the actual cause or intention behind an action, the process of rationalisation provided rich interpretive territory for understanding the boundaries of normativity and transgression interviewees constructed. In some cases my 'insider' status served to minimise the potential for rationalisation as the circumstances and context of some events were known to me. This benefit was counterbalanced by the danger that, through shared experience, I and the interviewee may have mutually assumed the rationale behind certain circumstances, and inadequately tested and explored this for the benefit of the reader (Daly, 1992).

Where interviews were not recorded the accuracy of data may be somewhat

diminished. I sought to be as accurate as I could in note taking, and that the exact phrases and words of the participant were recorded. Any mistakes are entirely my own.

Analysis and the Generation of Theory

I adopted a grounded theory (Glazer and Strauss, 1967) approach to the analysis of my research data for a number of reasons. My research aims went beyond the simple exploration and description of phenomenon. I was familiar with the, then, small body of existing literature relating to the micro-sociology of the private security industry, of which the most developed strand focused heavily on analysing contractor experiences through the paradigm of gender and masculinity (see Chapter 1:36-37). I was also familiar with the relatively limited research into the experiences of employees in the domestic security sector (Chapter 1:29). I was conscious that these studies had, in the main, been explanatory and many had a specific theoretical focus (i.e. gender and masculinity).

Within military sociology the work of Ouellet (2005) and Woodward and Jenkins (2011) had shown that factors such as spatiality, shared endeavour and proximity to events of historical significance were important in defining the lived experience of military service people. Indeed, Paul Higate, whose research was firmly situated in the field of gender studies, found that other factors, such as national and professional identity were important in determining the private military security contractor's construction of self (Higate, 2012a). It was necessary, therefore, to be able to derive from my data an emergent theoretical approach based on the concepts and categories I was observing (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), but unconnected, at least at the outset, with any pre-existing theory or typology. In this way I could aim to develop the existing paradigms used to understand and define the private security field being studied. Grounded theory provided this deliberate theoretical '*époche*' (Field and Morse, 1985).

Triangulation

The extended contact I had with some research participants, together with my former experience within both the military and private security sectors provided an additional dimension to this study. Bryman's proposition that 'extended

involvement in the social life of those he or she studies' (Bryman 2008:201) was a feature of my interaction with some interviewees, as was extended immersion within the community being researched (Noaks and Wincup, 2004). Retrospectively, and pre-dating the study, my immersion in both the military and private security fields had been significant. Furthermore, my current employment, involving the management and provision of security, meant that I had remained professionally associated with the private security industry and this assisted in the triangulation of data. On many occasions I already knew the nature and extent of an interviewee's involvement in the incidents they described, and their opinion, or 'construction', of that experience. My ethnographic observations provided a useful supplementary means to triangulate interview data. Thus my study has some of the benefits of the mixed methodology approach to triangulation advocated by Fielding (2010).

Documentary data analysis also offered opportunities for triangulation. A considerable volume of documentation was used in the generation of this study including reports by governments and transnational organisations, mass media reports, company brochures and websites, Curriculum Vitae and military and private security biographies. These documents have been used to verify 'facts' (e.g., to check, where possible that a company was conducting the type of service that a participant described being involved with), but were also subject to a similar 'grounded' analysis as that of interview transcriptions. Documents, and memoirs were viewed as a subjective construction of lived experience (Atkinson and Coffey 2004; Prior, 2003) and therefore requiring of a similarly robust process of analysis as that of interview data. Even 'official' documents, those originated by government organisations or private companies, had to be considered to reflect a subjective representation of their own subject matter (May, 2001), the hierarchies they described and the controls that they proposed an 'aspiration' rather than a neutral 'reality'. Further, the intended audience of any document had to be carefully considered when analysing its conceptual content; the narrative of a private security memoir differing considerably from the 'reality' presented in private security marketing material.

Focus Groups

As I came towards the end of data collection with different groups of interviewees I conducted focus groups, the aim of which was to triangulate data and test my preliminary findings. One focus group had two participants and the other two 4 participants respectively. All participants had been interviewed individually prior to the focus group. The focus groups addressed particular themes and topics emerging from my data analysis. The focus groups also allowed me to observe the extent to which participant narratives altered when they were in a group (Bryman, 2008, Noaks and Wincup, 2004) or accompanied by another participant. The focus groups proved particularly useful for establishing consensus around broad interpretive themes about which interviewees were uncertain or circumspect during individual interview. For example, interviewees were more confident assessing the size and constitution of the military private security field when they could test their assumptions with peers.

Coding

Conscious of the 'fairy tale' denigration of a grounded theory in which Wacquant questioned the extent to which a robust process of grounded analysis was really conducted by scholars claiming to apply the methodology (Wacquant, 2002:1481), I applied a deliberate structure to the generation of theory from data throughout the study. This took the following form: on completion of my interviews transcriptions were created, this text was then subject to open (Glazer and Strauss, 1967; 1968) or initial (Charmaz, 2008; 2009) coding. This involved the selection of a passage of text and the attribution of codes on a line-by-line basis. This was carried out by reading the text while listening to the audio recording of the interview. This process identified conceptual components present in the text and the audio data¹³. Through constant comparison these initial conceptual components were then grouped into broader categories - unifying concepts or 'axial codes' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Informed by theory,

¹³ Rapley (2001) highlights the importance of detailed transcription in establishing accurately the meaning of participant narratives. I used the practice of reviewing text and audio record together to the same ends.

these axial codes were themselves constantly compared. Memos were kept on the theoretical concepts that emerged from this comparison (the selective coding process described by Glaser and Strauss). As these theoretical concepts developed, they were recorded and given (provisional) placement within the structure of the study's substantive chapters. Thus, I aimed to synergize the development of theoretical concepts through memos, with the narrative plan for the thesis. As theoretical categories emerged, these were fed back into both the selection of potential interview participants and interview questions. The integration and refinement of theory emerged in the format of the draft chapters of the thesis. Finally, these theoretical proposals, refined and tested through theoretical sampling and triangulation focus groups, were represented in the substantive chapters of the thesis and its conclusion.

Presentation of Data

As this study relates to the experience of real people, I was keen to retain a sense of proximity between the reader and the participants portrayed in the study. It was only in this manner that the context of the interviewees' understanding of their work could be properly understood. As such, I have not chosen to adopt a matrix or graphical representation of my coding and analysis. While theoretical categories I describe in the substantive chapters have been derived from the grounded analysis of data, I have opted to retain a narrative format in the text that allows the reader to best hear the 'voice' of the interviewee. Quotes have been selected that best represent the categories of meaning and theory derived from the data. The quotes included in the text are not presented verbatim but have been subject to minor amendments to ensure understanding by the reader. For example, affectations of speech such as, 'like', 'you know' and 'basically' have often been removed, and irregularities of grammar or sentence construction, common in the spoken register have sometimes been amended. Without these amendments, both meaning and 'voice' may have been lost and the reading experience impaired. I have remained in each case, faithful to the language, context and meaning of the participants' statements as I understood them. I have aimed throughout to provide an account and analysis of my interviewees' social construction of private security that is both authentic and accessible.

Reflexivity and Insider Status

This study generated several methodological issues worthy of note particularly in relation to my own position. Beyond the simple mechanics of gaining access, interviewees were prepared to speak to me because they identified that, in sharing a common background I could be trusted to provide a more authentic (or perhaps, in their view, less critical) account than a researcher with different experience. This has allowed me to speak with a number of people who would have refused engagement with a researcher without this background. The confidence engendered by my 'insider' status enabled participants to discuss very sensitive issues, the trust implicit in this discourse helping to ensure the authenticity of the participants' narratives.

Despite this, my own position helped and hindered the research agenda. My 'insider' status, while providing me with significant existing knowledge of the field of study, access to participants and narratives not open to other researchers, and affording me a greater sensitivity to their nuanced responses (Padgett, 2008 and Kacen and Chaitin, 2006), also risked compromising the integrity of the data I collected through inner circle assumptions (Daly, 1992), projection biases (Drake, 2010) or a simple desire not to challenge interview participants by taking them into areas that might have been less comfortable for them, but nonetheless necessary to meeting the research aims. Constant reflexive self-examination was therefore at the heart of this study.

Yet, it was inevitable that, in conducting this research I affected and influenced my interviewees just as they influenced and affected me. One participant exemplified a sentiment expressed by a number of interviewees when he said, 'it's interesting to take a break and think about why you do what you do. It gives you a different perspective. You start to think about what the aim really is' (James). In turn, my own view of the military and private security has changed through contact with my interviewees and reading and thinking about the literature and scholarship that underpinned this study. As Berger (2015) observed, knowledge production cannot exist independently of the researcher producing it. The findings of this thesis are therefore derived from a co-constitution of knowledge between the research participants and me; an approach that replicates the 'abductive' analysis

of data described by Jo Reichertz (2007). However, adopting this approach meant that recognising and managing my own subjective dispositions and biases was critical if I was to ensure the reliability of my data (Kirk and Miller, 1986).

Trust and Bias

The recognition of bias associated with shared experience was a significant dynamic in this study. This became the subject of constant review with my supervisor and other research colleagues. In these conversations I would discuss my attitudes and feelings about the private security sector, and review the extent to which these attitudes aligned or diverged from those of my academic colleagues. Through this discourse I was able to explore, and reflect upon, the way in which people without military or private security experience constructed their understanding of these fields of social activity, and to try to challenge my inner circle assumptions. This process was aided by my grounded theory methodology. The analysis of narratives through social theory provided me with an increasingly divergent understanding of the logic and motives that underpinned my interviewees' construction of their experience. Through this I confronted the central challenge of the researcher using 'insider' access: that of distancing oneself from the 'doxa' (Bourdieu, 1977:165-7; 2000) of the researcher's former field to ensure the rigor of research, while at the same time not losing the contextual understanding of the participants' logic, and maintaining a communicative register that encouraged the exploration of 'back region' narratives (Goffman, 1959:93). In short, there was a necessity to remain steeped in the logic that underpins practice in the field, while at the same time distancing oneself from that same logic.

Accepting the dissonance of these two positions, and embracing the simultaneous 'insider/outsider' status of the researcher described by Lofland (1971), the reflexive quality of the research became an important measure of its rigour (Gemignani, 2011; Pillow, 2003). Maintaining this dissonant insider/outsider position left me with feelings of discomfort and guilt, that through my actions I was 'betraying' the research participants whom I interviewed. This feeling was not dissimilar to the emotion described by Stein (1964) in his study of working-class miners. My understanding of the trust placed in me by the interviewees and

their expectation that my background made me a sympathetic audience I knew to be at odds with the critical manner in which their narratives would be interpreted when exposed to social theory and an academic audience. While this discomfort existed I was reasonably confident that my analysis acknowledged the 'doxic', unspoken logic of the military, or private military security fields. At times this felt uncomfortably like deception, my own interaction with interviewees tailored to ensure that the most negative elements in the study could be explored without engendering a response that might curb access; a position not dissimilar (although perhaps less extreme) than that experienced by Leon Festinger in his ethnographic exploration of apocalyptic cults (Festinger et al., 1956) and reminiscent of Klatch's discomfort in her discourse with 'pro-life' activists (Klatch, 1988)¹⁴.

Elite Status and 'Dirty Work'

Of the 30 participants interviewed, almost all self-identified as being, or having been a member of an elite group. These constructions of elitism were most often the result of affiliation with military units that had a particularly stringent physical selection ($n=18$), practiced 'high policing' or 'non-green army' (see Chapter 1) roles ($n=15$), or who held special status as a result of their military rank¹⁵ and/or professional position ($n=5$). Additionally, three interviewees were part of the 'business elites' identified by Atkinson, Roberts and Savage (2012:2); a 'fusion' of business owners, 'high level managers' and 'top level professionals' in major businesses and corporations. Given these elite statuses I experienced similar methodological challenges to that of other 'elites research' (Aguar and Schneider, 2012), but also, as a former officer, had to manage the perception of my own 'elite' status in the eyes of some of my interviewees.

¹⁴ Leon Festinger and his group had to maintain the outward appearance of adherence to an apocalyptic cult while conducting their ethnography *When Prophecy Fails*. Klatch describes her experiences of conducting ethnography among members of a 'pro-life' group. She explains the dissonance that she experienced when research participants assumed that she held views sympathetic to those of the group that she was studying.

¹⁵ Characterised in this study as holding the commissioned officer ranks traditionally associated with 'professional' status and entailing training at an elite institution like the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

As well as being members of elite groups, participants were also members of groups that were subject to a 'dirty work' construction (Hughes, 1958, Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999), particularly in relation to the potential use of coercive force as an element of their role, both in their former military professions and within private military security¹⁶. Members of occupations subject to a 'dirty work' stigma often have to conduct social relations with people, inside and outside their occupation, who do not share their values and beliefs. In so doing they employ what Goffman described as 'front' and 'back region' narratives (Goffman, 1959:93). 'Front region' narratives are those used when the audience is not intimate and their response to the exposure of the 'dirty worker's' professional reality may engender moral opprobrium or disapproval. 'Back region' narratives are those engaged in with trusted colleagues or intimate friends and family. These narratives are expressed in circumstances free from the potential moral challenge to the workers' identity of a disapproving audience (Dick, 2005)¹⁷. As such, they are a more 'authentic' and reliable expression of the individual's lived experience.

In my research, I intended my 'insider' status to be used to elicit 'back' as well as 'front' region narratives. The division between 'front' and 'back' region narratives in the interviews was often very clear. In some cases the ritual of the interview initially meant participants adopted a 'front region' narrative even when they were well known to me. In other cases, interviewees, although only recently introduced to me, moved quite quickly into both subject matters and modes of discourse identifiably more 'back region'. At times participants gave verbal cues that they were moving into 'back region' discourse through the use of vernacular language or profanity. In other cases, 'back region' narratives were addressed outside the environment of the formal interview. This was particularly the case where I spent an extended amount of time with an interviewee before or after the interview had been concluded. Observations from these informal conversations were recorded in writing when I had the opportunity.

¹⁶ See Higate et al. (2019) on the 'spoiled identity' of military reservists.

¹⁷ Dick (2005:1374) illustrated the use of 'front' region narratives when interviewed about their use of coercive force. She saw this as a means by which the interviewees managed 'power relation' of the interview by minimizing the potential for moral opprobrium.

On occasion a participant's view of my status became a factor too. One interviewee, a former junior non-commissioned officer who had been talking quite freely, on finding out that I had served as a commissioned officer, altered his register and addressed me as 'sir' for the remainder of the interview, our relative status in our former profession re-asserting itself in a way that prevented me from retaining the rapport we had gained. The way constructions of rank/status affected participants' narratives, and the manner in which my former status could affect the way in which I viewed participant narratives, became an important element of my reflexive self-examination. This highlighted that 'insider status' was more complex than the binary insider/outsider paradigm suggests. While holding the broad status of an insider, my specific experience and background dictated the extent to which I was 'more or less' an insider. In this case the ex-junior non-commissioned officer, his perception of my 'officer' status established my 'otherness'; the interviewee's change of register indicating that there was a realm of constructed experience that they were not prepared to share with a former officer.

Analysis of the narratives provided in the interview showed how the interviewee altered his presentation of decisions surrounding the use-of-force, the 'dirty work' circumspection of moral judgment reasserting itself and causing him to present his decisions as being clearer and less ambiguous after he had identified my 'officer' status. As well as a changing both the register and content of our discourse, this represented a change to the nature of 'consent' implicit to the interview.

Research Ethics and Consent

The LSE Research Ethics Committee reviewed the research discussed in this thesis. All participants to the study were provided with a study sheet including a short explanation of the nature of the study and signed an 'informed consent' form (see Appendix C). This form made undertakings as to the security and management of the data that I would obtain in interview. It also provided an undertaking to participant anonymity and, where possible, the anonymity of organisations and individuals referred to in interview. This approach was intended to protect interviewees and allow the research participants to talk as

freely as possible about negative as well as positive experiences. I also agreed to contact participants prior to publication of any sensitive or prejudicial information relating to them.

Within the interviews, the establishment of the boundaries of consent was a constant reflexive dynamic. Indeed, the nature of the information communicated in the interview was characterised by interplay between three competing constructions of consent. The first was the extent to which interviewees were prepared to volunteer narrative data, answer questions, provide opinions or, even, consider the subject matter that I wanted to pursue. The second construction of consent was formed by the 'rules' of consent included in the study sheet and consent form, albeit understood differently by interviewer and interviewee. The third construction of consent was based on my own experience as interviews progressed; a subjective interpretation of the subject matter that I 'should' be able to discuss with the interviewees. In practice this meant that consent was multi-faceted and consistently negotiated throughout the different stages of the interview. This interplay was often subtle and not always explicit, but resulted in an accommodation as to what could, or should be discussed in interview that differed in almost every case. For this reason, no matter how carefully proscribed the study sheet, consent was not uniform or static, it was the subject of constant re-interpretation throughout the period of contact between the researcher and participant.

During the study I spent many hours with some participants outside the environment of interview. Some I met socially fairly frequently, others I spent considerable time with before and after interviews had been conducted. On these occasions my study, and private security in general, was a constant source of conversation. Frequently participants offered interpretations, opinions and examples that were clearly communicated as a result of their relevance to the study. The direct quotations that I use in the thesis are all taken from the interviews in which the boundaries of consent were more or less clear. Data provided to me outside the context of interview I have incorporated into field notes, and included where relevant in my analysis, but I have not included this data as reported speech or attributed material to an individual participant. Two

participants whose interviews included particularly sensitive data provided me with feedback via e-mail on the material I wanted to include in the thesis. Their wishes in relation to this have been honored in the text.

In this study I have aimed to provide an authentic account of how those working in the field of private military security see and experience their work. Further, through analysis of these accounts I develop a theoretical position that explains why work in this field is experienced in the way it is. In so doing I hope this research improves the understanding of private military security and its relationship with civil society. During this study I have asked my interviewees to engage in discourse that involved greater reflection and, at times, more intimacy than most conversations between peers in my erstwhile professions usually entails. In agreeing to this they have been generous to me and to the reader.

Chapter 3: Industry Development, Structure and Governance

Industry Structure Overview

What is the United Kingdom private military security industry? How is it defined and who defines it? How is it different from other areas of private security provision? Which services, practices and activities fall within its scope, and how are these areas of practice understood, constituted and expressed by industry practitioners? In this Chapter I describe the 'scope' of UK private military security. In so doing I focus on two important phases of industry development identified by my interviewees. The first is 'the Circuit', a term used to describe the private security industry between the 1960s and 1990s¹⁸. The second phase, the 'corporate security' era, extends from the 1990s through to the current day. In this section I discuss the expansion of private security services following the Global War on Terror, and the maritime security boom of the early 2000s.

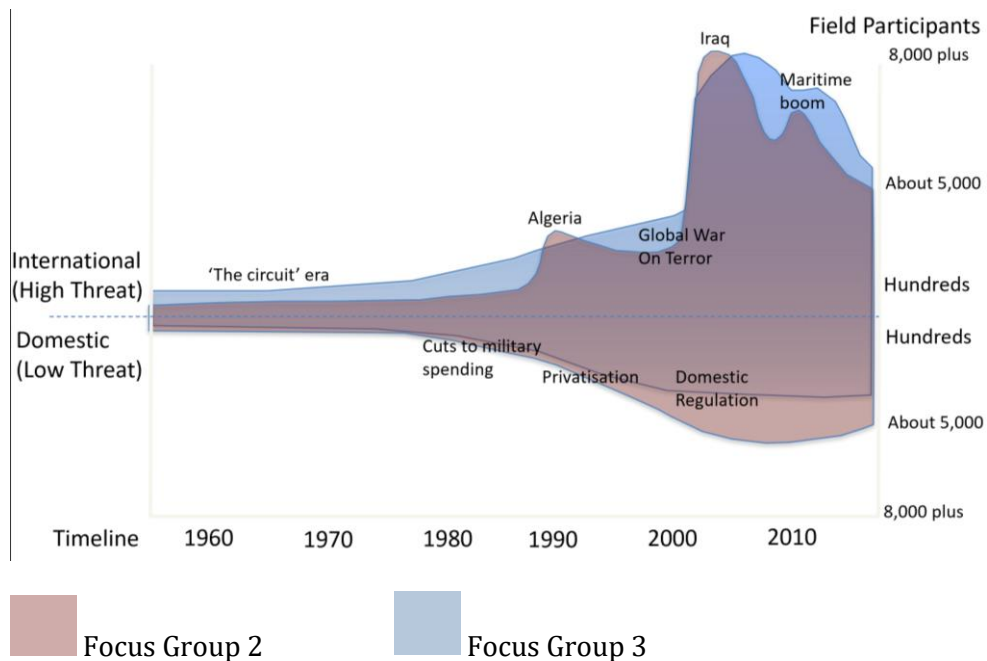
This Chapter draws from the experiences of a number of participants who were involved, and in some cases influenced the development of the UK private military security industry: Craig, an ex-Special Forces, freelance security consultant was involved in the security 'Circuit' of the 1980s and corporate security in the 1990s and 2000s; Roger, a former military officer, was responsible for managing a number of major United Kingdom firms throughout the days of 'the Circuit' and into the corporate era. Mike, an accountant, and civilian, occupied senior executive positions in private military security companies and brought a businessman's perspective to the emerging industry; and Lawrence, another former military officer was a corporate executive in a maritime security business.

My participants provided a description of the breadth and extent of the 'field' of private security within which they were active. To reinforce these narrative explanations, I have sought to provide a visual representation to the reader that reflects how my participants saw their field of work. This approximate topology was drawn from two of the focus groups I conducted towards the end of the study. Here, participants were provided with a single piece of paper with a timeline on

¹⁸ Bob Shepherd uses the same term in his memoir 'the Circuit' (Shepherd, 2008). Shepherd's 'Circuit' extends well into the post War on Terror era demonstrating that the term is still in common use.

the x-axis corresponding to the duration that they considered the private military field in its current form had been active. The y-axis was split between domestic and international work and further divided into an approximate assessment of the number of people actively engaged in the field. The task was intended to collaboratively develop a visual representation of the private military security field and its development. Groups were asked to record significant points that explained the changes represented in their diagram. The results are reproduced below:

Participant Constructions of Military Private Security Field Topology



This visual representation was not based on hard data, and was the subject of some uncertainty and debate between interviewees. No directly comparable data exists that would indicate the number of people involved in the UK centric, transnational provision of private security and military services represented in this chart. However, the trends illustrated are broadly consistent with figures that indicate a considerable rise in spending on private military security by the UK Government in the period between 2003 and 2008 (Freedom of Information Act, 2012) and globally between 2003 and 2012 (War on Want, 2016:4). They also broadly correspond with White's (2017) analysis of the employment trajectories of 'private military veterans'. Perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this

study it provides an insight into the way in which participants understood and constructed the scope and extent of the industry, and the nature of the 'field' in which they worked. This 'field' was perceived to encompass predominantly former British military service people (overwhelming men) who engaged in the operational provision of security internationally and domestically. It did not encompass third country nationals with whom interviewees may have worked while overseas, but did include former British Army Gurkhas. As such, there were both a gendered and racialised aspects to the construction of field. Accepting these limitations, the chart provides a visual key to some of the major dynamics discussed in this chapter.

The Circuit

Craig was in his 60s, heavy set and athletic in build, his one visible concession to age being the reading spectacles he used to examine text. Before making the transition to private security Craig served in the British Army as a Non-Commissioned Officer in the 22nd SAS Regiment. He was a veteran of the Regiment's secret involvement in the conflict in Oman during the 1970s. Leaving the military in the early 1990s he began working in private security. Craig's experience in this sector extended across a range of activity both domestic and international; he routinely undertook four security jobs a year throughout his career, often working for different private security companies doing security training, 'operational work' (usually close protection, or 'body guarding') and consultancy (often involving security assessments and contract management).

Early in our conversation Craig described himself 'a veteran of the Circuit', a term he used to define the early years of the development of the modern private military security industry in the United Kingdom and, more than this, the informal network of (predominantly) former UK Special Forces personnel who transitioned into private security work on completion of their military service. The construction of 'the Circuit' to which Craig referred was more than just a temporal 'phase' in the industry's development, or simply a group of professional contacts; it described a series of practices, behaviours and values that characterised this form of elite private security. For Craig, his involvement in 'the Circuit' defined his professional identity. He described himself as 'a product' of the Circuit; a security

operator with a specific brand of knowledge and expertise; part of a generation of actors with a 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1990) of security practice that has been foundational in the development of the United Kingdom private military security industry.

At the time of Craig's transition from the military, private security was a relatively obscure field of practice that attracted little public attention. As a contemporary of Craig observed:

'The private security industry in 1989 was really a very unknown industry. I guess what you would have is normal manned-guarding and static-guarding work, and then a lot of the close protection was an overspill for people that live in London, experienced doormen, the big gorilla, or 'men in black' type image. There was a more specialist side of the private security industry which was really born in the late 70s and early 80s. Predominantly that was controlled by Control Risks Group, DSL/ArmorGroup and companies like Saladin, doing big training jobs or consultancy. Most with a memorandum of understanding with the FCO¹⁹.' (Ryan)

Even at this early stage within the industry there was a division between two separate 'fields' of practice. A less specialist 'civilian' sector of security, tied to traditional manned guarding and incorporating nightclub and venue doormen who may have transitioned into the 'body guarding' of celebrity and show business clients in a domestic (i.e. London) environment; and a more specialist sector oriented to overseas contracting and predominantly employing former military personnel. This social construction underpins the concept of 'the Circuit', which was clearly linked to the latter type of security practice.

Craig traced the history of 'the Circuit' to the actions of David Stirling, the former founder of the SAS Regiment during the 1960s:

'It all stems from Stirling, David Stirling. In the sixties he set up Watchguard International. They did one or two jobs in East Africa²⁰ and maybe in the Middle East and it wasn't very big or very well-known and it would be literally down to less than twenty people involved at that.'

¹⁹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

²⁰ See also Musah and Fayemi (2000) on Watchguard's activities in Zambia between 1967 and 1969.

Craig suggested that the security company Watchguard originated from Stirling's involvement in the Mau-Mau insurgency of 1950s. The company's work continued beyond Africa with discreet operations in Yemen, ostensibly sanctioned by the British government, providing military services to counter the presence of Nasser's Egyptian forces in the country during the civil war of 1959²¹. However, Watchguard's activity considerably expanded following the kidnap of the Saudi Arabian Minister of Petroleum Ahmed Zaki Yamani (and other OPEC oil ministers) by 'Carlos the Jackal' at a summit in Vienna in 1975:

'The thing that kicked it all off then was when Yamani was taken by Carlos in seventy-five. He was the Chief Negotiator for OPEC. Now, this is hearsay, the Saudi's paid massive [to secure Yamani's release] fortunately, for whatever reason they negotiated a settlement. Carlos disappeared, Yamani was released, but Carlos seemingly told Yamani that next time he wouldn't be so lucky. So when the Saudis paid Yamani to carry on doing this work on their behalf, he said "okay but I want a proper bodyguard team not those people who ran away"²². A bloke called Jim Johnson who was, I think ex SIS²³, he had been in the SOE²⁴ during the war, David Walker, he was an EOD²⁵ Engineer, been an Oxford graduate; he had been a Troop and Squadron Commander in G Squadron²⁶, He was just about leaving [the military] and the three of them, Jim Johnson, with his connections to the City and the intelligence services, David Walker, with his recent connections to R Squadron, he was OC²⁷ R Squadron²⁸ at the time, and Brigadier Wingate Gray, who was an old Colonel of the Regiment²⁹, those three then put KMS together, Keenie Meenie Services.' (Craig)

In the foundation of KMS Craig described the establishment of a security 'assemblage' (Abrahamson and Williams, 2011) based around a small network of people connected by their service in, or affiliation with, the SAS Regiment. This

²¹ See also Kinsey (2006:44-46) on Sterling's involvement in Yemen and the formation of Watchguard.

²² Yamani's Saudi bodyguards allegedly fled the scene when the group led by Carlos the Jackal attacked the summit.

²³ SIS, The Secret Intelligence Service (MI6)

²⁴ SOE, the Special Operations Executive, a clandestine organisation founded by Winston Churchill to wage unconventional warfare against the Germans during the Second World War, a forerunner of the SAS.

²⁵ EOD, Explosive Ordnance Demolition (bomb disposal).

²⁶ G Squadron is one of the four operational, or 'Sabre' Squadrons of the SAS. A Squadron consists of approximately 65 SAS soldiers broken down into 4 Troops.

²⁷ OC, Officer Commanding.

²⁸ R Squadron was a Territorial Army Squadron of the SAS comprising former regular soldiers and providing a reserve to the regular army SAS for casualty replacement in the event of war.

²⁹ The 22nd SAS Regiment

core group, possessing high social capital, and the specific symbolic capital of elite military service, had connections to a number of correspondingly elite organisations within the world of business and government intelligence. These connections made it possible to commodify the counter-terrorism skills that they had acquired during their military service. Craig describes how the first 'job' carried out by KMS was 'putting together a bodyguard team for Yamani'. KMS's business developed from here and ultimately resulted in a project that came to be called 'The Goat Farm', the establishment of the Sultan's Special Force in Oman; in Craig's words, the creation of a Special Forces regiment of the Oman army 'raised, trained, paid, all the logistics provided, procurement, everything done from the commercial company in London; A brilliant operation'.

KMS's focus was not restricted to international work. 'They also had another organisation running on the side called Saladin. Saladin did everything in the UK' (Craig). Another interviewee (Gary) described having carried out surveillance tasks in London for Saladin including the observation and infiltration of environmental protest groups. Thus, even at this formative stage in the development of the private military security industry, individuals would frequently transition between security work in the international and domestic spheres.

KMS's development was not unique. During the same period other former members of UK Special Forces were developing commercial opportunities for the sale of security services:

'At about the same time that KMS was getting set up there was another small group set themselves up as Control Risk. That was in the mid-seventies and people like Arish Turle, another Squadron Commander, and a very, very innovative and bright guy, and Simon Adams-Dale, and they had a connection with the insurance company Hiscox' (Craig).

Through their connection with the City of London insurance industry, Control Risks began providing kidnap and ransom consultancy to a raft of companies and individuals responding to growing public consciousness of terrorist hijacks and hostage taking. The establishment of Control Risks was quickly followed by that of DSL, Defence Systems Limited, another London based security company formed

by former SAS Officers Alistair Morrison and Richard Bethel. Craig describes KMS/Saladin, Control Risks and DSL as ‘the three big players all the way through the eighties’. In Craig’s words the work of these companies, ‘ticked along with jobs in Sri Lanka, body guarding the Sultan of Brunei, the Maktoums³⁰, all the big players, Prince Bandar, the Saudi Ambassador to the US’. This situation prevailed until the advent of large-scale oil industry engagement in Algeria in the early 1990s.

Thus, from the 1960s to the 1990s ‘the Circuit’ provided an opportunity for a small group of, mainly, former-UK Special Forces soldiers to commoditise the skills acquired in the elite military establishment within a market where supply and demand remained fairly stable. Craig described an industry where, for certain types of work, such as complex physical security and asset protection tasks in hostile environments, all the major industry companies would be accessing a pool of seven to ten former-military contractors sufficiently experienced and trusted to undertake this work. The requirement to have already established oneself as a ‘credible operator’ within military Special Forces (or associated units) acted as an informal control over access to this labour market. This, coupled with the ‘social capital’ of network access to potential clients, meant that those former SAS soldiers at the heart of ‘the Circuit’ experienced very little uncertainty in their ability to continue routinely accessing discreet and well paid employment. The alignment between the elite former soldiers and international political elites (particularly in the Middle East and Africa), as well as business elites still benefitting from residual post-colonial advantage (again, particularly in African markets), coupled with the privileged patronage (or benign acquiescence) of the British intelligence and foreign policy establishment, underpinned this small but stable market for military security knowledge and services.

In Craig’s view, the first real change to this status quo took place in the 1990s. The Algerian Civil War (beginning in 1991) saw the targeting of western oil workers by the GIA³¹ and other Islamist groups opposed to the secular Algerian

³⁰ Ruling family of the United Arab Emirates.

³¹ Groupe Islamique Armé

Government. Craig described how, during this war, over a period of 20 months, violence cost the lives of 117 expatriate workers (Thornbury, 2011). The acceleration of violence in Algeria created an increase in demand for commercially available military security expertise. For the first time the 'big three' companies were unable to meet the demands of the international oil corporations through the small pool of predominantly former-SAS circuit 'insiders'. Another challenge for British security companies was that Algeria was a former French colony and, while many former SAS soldiers spoke Arabic as a legacy of operations during the 1970s in Oman, very few spoke French. It was natural therefore that companies began to recruit French speaking ex-foreign legionnaires who themselves became incorporated into 'the Circuit's' inner circle. With the expansion of business in Algeria a small number of new companies entered the market and began to compete with the 'big three'³². However, the impact of this remained limited. The incorporation of former Foreign Legion French speakers providing less a 'democratisation' of the labour force than another esoteric pool of regional 'Africa specialists' the recruitment of whom was, if anything, more arcane than that their British Special Forces counterparts³³.

Craig considered that, even during its period of greatest activity, 'the Circuit' remained a relatively 'exclusive club' involving only 'a few hundred' active members. These were characterised by their 'credible military background' and experience of working independently in areas of conflict. Further, the structure of the companies operating during the 'Circuit' era replicated the class based rank structure of the British military. Business owners, the first modern generation of military security entrepreneurs, were of the officer class, often former Squadron or Troop Commanders in the SAS. The work of security consultancy, or operational service provision, carried out in large part by former Non-Commissioned Officers of the same organisation. These former NCOs would

³² This included the companies Stirling (another firm associated with David Stirling, founder of the SAS) and Generik.

³³ One interviewee described the difficulty of conducting pre-employment due diligence on members of the French Foreign Legion 'The only way you can be really sure they have done what they say they have done is if you have a contact in the central Legion personnel office in Castlenuaudary. The Legion won't give you anything officially, so you have to know the right people to talk to if you want to be sure.'

transition between a number of companies conducting a variety of tasks, the military capital of their Special Forces experience and the social capital of network access to the 'officer cast' of business entrepreneur (and the elite clients with whom they had contact), guaranteeing a stable post military second career.

Craig considered the 'heyday' of "the Circuit" to have been the Algerian war of the 1990s. For him this provided both interesting work and lucrative remuneration as demand for his services increased. However, the increasing demand for security services by major corporations engaged in the early stages of neoliberal globalisation also heralded the 'swan song' of 'the Circuit' as a restricted, discreet and privileged market in which unofficial social control maintained a certain standard of operations (and operator):

'Well in Algeria when these hundred expats were killed the daily rate went up very nicely, levelled off again and then after the Twin Towers, I mean for nine months my feet didn't touch the ground. I was visa'd up to work in Pakistan. In fact I was working in Pakistan when it happened. So I mean Algeria was a good impulse - I am looking at it purely from an ex two-two³⁴ guy's point of view - Algeria was manageable in that the market had got too big, but big enough for us to be able to cope with it. After nine eleven, and especially when they decided to go into Iraq, the Circuit as it was, couldn't handle it; they didn't have the men. So basically they started watering down the product. If I'm the product of the Circuit, Iraq watered it down.'

(Craig)

Craig's depiction of 'the Circuit' demonstrates all the characteristics of a Bourdieusian 'field' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1988; 1996a; 1996b; 1999; 2005; Bourdieu et al., 1990a and 1990b), it had a spatial locus and members met, worked and communicated with each other. But it was also sphere of activity defined by a series of 'norms of practice', behaviours that constituted the 'habitus' of the field's participants, mostly derived from former military experience. Within the field different forms of capital interacted. The military, symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu 1986:241-258) that Craig derived from his service in an elite military unit allowed him to 'move' successfully within the field. In so doing he associated with groups of military entrepreneurs, often former-Special Forces

³⁴ Ex two-two, an ex-member of the 22nd SAS Regiment.

officers, themselves possessed of social capital that provided access to elite clients, and economic capital sufficient to allow them to create and run the businesses that employed Craig for much of his career. However, the exchange and interrelation of capital were not static. Globalisation and neoliberal economics (Harvey 2005; Rose and Miller, 2010) altered the opportunities for financial capital and with it the 'field' of military private security changed, as in Craig's view, did the practices and behaviours of actors within the sector.

The development of the private security industry can be seen to be the result of a raft of socio-economic changes that have not been restricted to the United Kingdom (Weiss 2007). Musah and Fayemi (2000) observe how, in Africa, these changes have created new opportunities for the commoditisation of military activity in ways that have both paralleled and converged with the UK private military security industry. As Kinsey (2006:58) highlights, the growth of the United Kingdom private security industry cannot be viewed in isolation from its international counterparts. Pete, whose story I examine in detail in Chapter 7, observed that 'the South Africans had their own Circuit'. Thus, the conception of 'the Circuit', and private military activity generally as 'fields' allows us to see how these 'communities of practice' can exist with their own discreet behaviours and logic, while at the same time interacting to influence and change the nature and development of other fields with their own distinct national focus.

The Development of Corporate Military Security

Roger's office was modern, functional and understated – and located ostentatiously close to Britain's locus of state power; minutes walk from Whitehall and nestled in the expensive housing of the 'business end' of Belgravia. Roger was a former British Army officer. Following a short period of service in a Cavalry Regiment, he left the military to work in the insurance industry in London. After another relatively short, although not unsuccessful period in insurance, he returned to the military field when he applied for a role as a contract officer with the Army of Oman in the 1970s. During this time Roger spent 6 years training and re-integrating demobilised rebels into the Sultan of Oman's armed forces. During the 1980s he took up a position with one of the 'big three' British security companies in Africa. Here he trained militias in Mozambique in military and

security techniques to enable them to protect 'critical national infrastructure'. Roger described this as a 'joint state/private initiative' that paved the way to Mozambique's successful application to join the Commonwealth in 1995. His career involved a number of transitions between the private military security sector and state organisations; he worked for the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office as an observer during the Bosnia conflict. Following this, he moved into a series of senior management positions in a number of UK based private military security companies. At the time of interview Roger was responsible for the corporate governance of one of the UK's largest private security companies. In this capacity found himself at the heart of operational and ethical decision-making in the industry as it has transitioned from 'the Circuit', to its contemporary 'corporate' form.

Roger saw the current condition of the UK private security industry as being intrinsically tied to the growth of what he describes as 'stability support' operations. These operations were the result of foreign policy interventions, predominantly conducted by the United States and United Kingdom (but also undertaken by transnational organisations such as the United Nations) that have aimed to influence the emergence of political and sovereign power in the post-Cold War era. Kinsey (2006:59) has characterised this period as one in which the British government sought to maintain its global position as a 'major player' internationally, protecting its commercial rights and interests, but increasingly affected by the constraints of international law, changes to the nature of mass media coverage and considerations of ethics and human rights among a domestic audience. Critically, this was also a period that saw considerable constraints placed on state sector military spending, particularly the retention of standing armies of directly employed military service people (Krahmann, 2010a). The phenomenon of private sector involvement in 'stability support' was also, in part the result of a political reluctance in most 'western' nations to see the commitment of national military forces to foreign policy interventions that could not be clearly identified as a national necessity, particularly where this may have involved the military sustaining casualties. The post Cold War expectation of a 'peace dividend' and the still fresh legacy of failed military intervention by the US in South East

Asia, created a period between 1989 and 2001 of considerable 'casualty aversion' within western political culture (See Kull and Destler, 1999 and Von Bredow, 1994 in Caforio: 2003:178). It was within this changing political, ethical and commercial environment that the United Kingdom private security industry involvement in 'stability support' evolved.

Roger described this development through a history of broadening interaction with an increasingly diverse range of civil society groups and actors. Initially this interaction was brought about through the physical proximity of private security staff and civil society groups in regions where 'stability support' operations were being conducted: 'Liaison with Human Rights Watch etcetera really began because we were sharing the same operating space'. This in turn gave rise to the development of 'personal relations' between people working in private security and those engaged in humanitarian and human rights based work. In Roger's words: 'It [communication] comes about because somebody knows somebody; somebody in Human Rights Watch comes to know or meet somebody in [a private security company]'. Roger described how, with this interaction, came the realisation that despite their different 'methodologies and cultures', the interests of the private security industry and civil society groups were 'not so far apart' and that the 'end desire of both parties is exactly the same'.

Roger gave the example of the Congo during the 1990s where international organisations and charities were concerned that private security companies were employing child labour and carrying weapons to intimidate a population. He described how members of his company were able to clarify that, in this case, they were doing neither of these things, but that the work they were conducting supported the necessary aim of achieving economic stability in the country. Through this discourse a convergence of purpose was achieved, both sides recognising that they were working towards similar goals. This led to further discussions where certain members of the private security community came to be seen as 'legitimate interlocutors', explaining the work of the industry to a growing range of groups in civil society (including academia).

‘At that time one of the Directors of [private security company] was of the same nationality as Singer³⁵, and they started talking, and that bridge then developed. People wanted to understand us and, because of a culture of positive engagement we were prepared to speak. We believed that we knew our subject matter sufficiently, and were sufficiently moderate to mean that we could speak with credibility for the industry.’ (Roger)

Thus, in Roger’s view, the more established firms in the United Kingdom market began to extend their interaction beyond the exclusive field of ‘the Circuit’ and in so doing started to actively shape societal perception of private military security:

‘By 1998 my company had a culture change that was really a change of management. There was a recognition that we could no longer keep the door closed to Amnesty international and others who were watching the industry, but we had to engage. We entered into a period of positive engagement; if you, Amnesty, have a concern, real or perceived, come and talk about it. We may not agree but we will both go away better informed from the process. So a number of us began to engage with these groups who had concerns about us. This provided some self-education to us, like looking in a mirror. We had to see how others saw us not just how we saw ourselves. Given what was going on in the rest of the world and the rise of Executive Outcome and Sandline³⁶, we recognised that civil society had an inevitable and justifiable interest in men with guns and what they got up to. It was not enough to be seen to be ‘something or other’ by other people; we had to define what we were and therefore work within certain bounds. Not just what we thought was best, but what could be written and defined as adequate, and when we made decisions ensure these were sustainable decisions that we could then justify.’ (Roger)

In Roger’s description, the process of widening interaction with civil society groups had the effect of forcing elements of the industry to work to define their own culture, creating norms and values through the formation of administrative structures that, hitherto, had been informal where they had existed at all.

This initiative, predominantly undertaken by the larger and more established companies, changed the manner in which these firms were managed. Their internal decision-making architecture began to reflect the ‘new reality’. Roger

³⁵ Peter Singer is an American political scientist.

³⁶ Companies created in the 1990s and notable for their preparedness to engage in offensive operations, see Singer (2003:115)

described the emergence of formal structures of governance within security companies:

'You have to start talking about decisions and record what you conclude; board minutes had to reflect an approach to this. Thereafter, where you had more complicated matters it became necessary to consider an ethics committee to debate and research the issues that you might face. Whether this is the activities of right wing groups in Latin America, and whether we might be a party to that or not, inadvertently. Whether it was - should we engage in a contract in Burma to protect a pipeline when we consider that the pipeline might be constructed by forced labour? If we were asked to export water cannon to Zimbabwe, did we consider that these would solely be used to suppress democratic protest? We had to start considering the issues in the business that we were offered, and to record that, so that when challenged, we could justify why we might have made a decision, even the wrong decision. But we couldn't be faulted for not having made any decision.' (Roger)

Roger described a period during which a vanguard of mature and established actors began the process of creating standards of corporate governance in an industry in which these standards had been largely absent. In his view this development led to a division between 'those firms up for this cultural branding and those who were not, those who were purely economically driven', a polarisation that was exacerbated by the very rapid growth and restructure of the industry that occurred in the wake of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Despite this, the discourse with civil society described by Roger led to the development of a broader structure of governance across the industry.

In 2004 the United Kingdom Government released a Green Paper on regulation of the private security industry (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2002)³⁷. The release of this paper prompted the more established private security companies in the United Kingdom to participate in a meeting of The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) at Oxford University in October 2004. During this meeting a number of firms, including Erinys, AKE, Aegis and Control Risks shared a stage

³⁷ Kinsey (2006:89) proposed the publication of this Green Paper as the point at which the United Kingdom government accepted that private military companies were sufficiently embedded into the system of international security to mean that their activity, while in need of regulation, should be accepted as legitimate.

and, in Roger's words: 'all said the same thing; we need to work together to present a common front with a common code of practice'. Even Tim Spicer, a central figure in the activity of both Sandline International and Executive Outcomes, was reported to have said 'We reject the idea of offensive action, the previous model doesn't work, the industry cannot offer an offensive capability'. In so doing, he identified one of the most significant and contested boundaries of behaviour in private military security: that between offensive and defensive (or protective) security operations, a boundary that I explore in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

This meeting, and the common position reached by participating security companies, gave rise to the formation of the British Association of Private Security Companies (the BAPSC), a membership organisation founded by Andy Bearpark, a former British government civil servant and Director of Operations and Infrastructure for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq (European Parliament, 2014). The creation of this association aimed to provide a 'platform' for private security companies from which they could interact collectively with the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In Roger's view the creation of the BAPSC in 2005 was, at least in part, a consequence of the desire of the FCO to 'legitimise' its already considerable contact with (and in some cases reliance upon) the private security industry.

The FCO's desire to adequately structure relations with the private security sector became increasingly acute in the wake of the killing of 17 unarmed civilians in Nisour Square, Baghdad, by members of the American private security company, Blackwater, working on contract to the US Department of State in 2007 (Krahmann, 2017). In Roger's interpretation, the mutual realisation across government and the industry of the potential impact of this type of 'lapse', led to further discussions being convened in 2008 sponsored by the Swiss Government. Representatives from the private security industry, civil society groups and government officials from the 17 ratifying states, formed a committee that oversaw the creation of The Montreux Document on Pertinent International Legal Obligations and Good Practices for States related to Operations of Private Military

and Security Companies during Armed Conflict of 17 September 2008 (ICRC and FDFA, 2009).

The Montreux document, a non-binding and non-legal text, articulated a common view of norms and standards in relation to the employment of private military security companies by nation states based on voluntary principles of security and human rights. On conclusion, members of the Montreux Committee presented the document to the Swiss government. In Roger's words 'we were describing ourselves, our own position' and asking the Swiss Government to support the participants of Montreux in the creation of an industry in the image they had defined. In 2009, with the support of the Swiss Government the principles articulated in the Montreux Document were used to underpin the development of the International Code of Conduct (ICoC) (ICoCA, 2009) for private military security companies. The ICoC was agreed and concluded in 2010. Following this, participants of Montreux requested that the Swiss Government support them in the creation of an international governance mechanism for private military and security activity. In 2012 a formal standard, against which the compliance of providers of private military and security services with the ICoC was launched. These standards, known as ANSI/ASIS PSC.1-2012, for ground based security and ANSI/ASIS PSC.4-2013 for maritime security, were subject to external validation by third party auditors³⁸ and were incorporated into the ISO standard 18788.³⁹. The implication of this standard for certified companies was, in Roger's words, that:

'Everybody from Managing Director to uniformed guard has been looked at and their comprehension of human rights and standards of training have been reviewed. All that work leads up to an industry that recognises and trains for the recognition of human rights as integral to its operation. So the understanding of higher order considerations is presented as a fundamental principle of operations.' (Roger)

³⁸ Such as Intertek Moody.

³⁹ By 2014 the first UK companies were receiving their certification to the PSC1 standard. Despite this the compliance of even major companies to the standard was inconsistent. By 2016 Control Risks Group, one of the most dominant companies in the market and a direct participant of the Montreux talks and the ICoC exercise had, according to one interviewee, only received certification for their Iraq operating company despite, according to their literature, having offices in 36 countries globally.

Iraq and The Global War on Terror

The narratives of Roger and Craig illustrate the transformation of the UK private military security industry from the discreet, and often secretive work of 'the Circuit' to a structure incorporating greater integration with 'norms of business'. Roger considers these to have been 'fully embraced by the most progressive elements of the industry by 2005'. However, the proposed trajectory of the United Kingdom private military security industry towards the norm of self-governed ethical stability has not been smooth. The inception of the Global War on Terror in the wake of the attack on the United States on September 11th 2001, and the subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003, had a profound effect on the industry's evolution. While, in Roger's view, the industry's expansion had led to a strengthening of the governance structure of the field, Craig observed how standards of service provision had changed:

'This is the history of it. So in 1999 that is how small it [The United Kingdom private military security industry] was; and then they flew those two planes into the Twin Towers. To be mercenary about it, it created a lot of work. But because of this they started watering down the product, if I am the product, they started watering it down by having one of our blokes⁴⁰ with a team of guys with less experience. Some blokes working in Iraq and Afghan now, they are just ex- doormen. You know a big strong lad goes from being a bouncer basically and they give him a sub-machine gun and let him loose on the streets.' (Craig)

This pluralisation of military (and non-military) experience caused by the number of new entrants to the field, and the demand for their labour, fundamentally affected the implicit guarantees of conduct and behaviour that participants felt had underpinned the professional ethos of 'the Circuit'. This challenged the perceived boundaries of the field.

Mike's background was not military. He was an accountant and had acted as the Finance Director and Chief Financial Officer of a number of multinational companies. He had begun his career in the oil industry, working for one of the largest global providers of oilfield services. Through this he became familiar enough with the field of private security to take a position within one of the more

⁴⁰ A former member of the SAS.

established UK companies as Financial Director and subsequently CEO (a position he was appointed to a short time after the invasion of Iraq). As CEO, Mike dealt directly with both commercial and operational elements of security provision. He observed how the Global War on Terror changed the structure of the private military security marketplace.

‘2001 changed the industry. On the back of the military going into Afghanistan and subsequently into Iraq, and then the significant support function needed on the back of the Iraq War created a new industry. So there is a whole heap of companies that have been born of Iraq. There are some great examples of two-bit organisations turning over 100k beforehand, and then all of a sudden they are turning over 20 million. Erinys was one, Johnny Garrat’s company. Blue Hackle another one. Aegis got a 40 million a year contract when they hadn’t in fact turned over a penny previously. The problem with that – with the businesses that were born of Iraq is that people were falling over themselves just to get workers – because they had to have ‘boots on the ground’. And therefore it took a reasonable amount of time and a number of pretty terrible incidents for the policies and the processes and the checks and balances to actually catch up with the number of people on the ground.’ (Mike)

The expansion of activity in Iraq changed the ‘field’ of private security in respect of the external groups and actors with whom the industry had contact. While Roger provided evidence of the development of field-to-field contact with civil society groups in a manner that has reinforced structures of governance in the sector, Mike illustrated how the expansion of Iraq negatively impacted on industry actors’ behaviour. He said that there was a commonly held belief that a number of the major UK companies had engaged in corruption to obtain contracts⁴¹. Beyond the suspicion of corruption in Iraq, the opportunities presented by the conflict encouraged the development of some less salubrious field-to-field relations in the domestic sphere. Mike gave the example of one of the smaller British security companies established at the start of the Iraq conflict:

‘I happened to be at a function 6 months ago where the owner of this company was telling a bunch of entrepreneurs how he got into the game.

⁴¹ A number of participants alleged that one British company had obtained a contract for the coordination of all private security movement in Iraq with a value of some 40 million dollars per annum by bribing a US official.

He was working for [a large US based security company]. [They] sent him out there [Iraq]. He saw what was going on and said to [the company] “we have to set up an Office”. [The US company] decided it wasn’t for them; they were risk averse. So he and his mate set up the business. They went around all the usual sources of funding but couldn’t get the money. So he went to an illegal moneylender in Glasgow and borrowed 250K in cash, in a holdall, handed over at a roadside layby. He goes off and he buys some armoured vehicles off Saloon Cars in Northern Ireland that had been surveillance cars during the troubles. Spray painted them as taxis and then ran around Baghdad just as a taxi. Got everyone in the car to wear weapons and tactical kit. Six months later he paid back the 250K plus interest of 20% in cash. [...] Anyway – you roll it on, that was 2004 – 2011 they sold that business for 60 million dollars. 60 million! They sold it to a private equity business in the States.’ (Mike)

Thus the ‘frontier’ nature of business in Iraq (both operationally and commercially) can be seen to have created incentives for transgression that were enacted both internationally and domestically.

Mike viewed the private military industry through the prism of business, for him the defining character of the companies operating in Iraq following the invasion was that they were ‘immature’ in a commercial sense. The Iraq phenomenon encouraged this juvenility, as many providers were ‘opportunistic’, not looking at the sustainability and longevity of the business they were creating, but instead interested in ‘making hay while the sun shined’. Mike, like Roger, felt that it was the larger and more established companies, focused on the development of their businesses beyond the ‘Iraq bubble’ that led the evolution of the industry to a more mature model. Like Roger, he considered that the development of effective standards of corporate governance was key to this process:

‘The quality and the rigour of those processes will be a function of the maturity and the size of the business. If you look at Erinys at one point they had a contract to provide 17,000 Iraqis to protect a pipeline. You think what the hell did you do? They basically stood them out every 20 yards. How do you run a payroll process for 17 thousand people? How do you get quality service in there? How do you get accountability? Bloody difficult. But did they have any reservation about taking the contract? No, they didn’t. They just said “yes we can” because it was about taking a big chunky contract. Another company got the command and control contract; they coordinated all movements for all security companies. What screening did

they have in terms of process to actually deploy and manage that contract? They didn't have any reference points, they didn't have anything. A lot of these companies used these big chunk contracts that they never would have got outside Iraq as a way to get in to the type of things that they shouldn't have been doing in the first place.' (Mike)

Mike highlighted one of the major problems in analysing the private security industry; that the nature of security work can be sufficiently diverse as to make the categorisation, and therefore regulation of the industry difficult (Kinsey, 2006:9; Carmola, 2010:9-39). This complexity was compounded by the practice of security companies undertaking work well beyond their core competence in order to establish commercial relations that might lead to more conventional security contracts. The history of private security in Iraq was replete with examples of security companies whose activity began with the commission of 'soft services' (accommodation, transport, logistics, postal delivery etc.) that in another environment would have been the preserve of established specialist providers⁴². In so doing the private security industry exponentially increased its field-to-field relations with a range of industry actors with whom they had previously had little contact. Within a short time, 'security' had become the business of corporate managers responsible for health and safety, human resources, legal-compliance, operations, logistics and even administration, in addition to the burgeoning number of Chief Security Officers, Heads of Security and security advisors employed by the corporate sector.

Despite these changes, the Iraq boom was not to last. Allan, a former-commando described how the employment of nationals from third countries limited the opportunities available for former British service personnel:

'First people would employ ex-British Army Ghurkhas, who were cheaper than UK squaddies⁴³. Then the same people were providing ex-Indian Army Ghurkhas, who were cheaper than the British Army ones. Before you knew it companies were recruiting guys from Chile and Columbia, anyone who could carry a gun.'

⁴² One participant described working for a company specializing in de-mining operations that diversified into the procurement of luxury goods, agricultural equipment and livestock as well as the provision of administrative support for visa and university applications.

⁴³ Squaddies is a colloquial term for British soldiers.

Terry, a former Paratrooper, confirmed this: ‘Yes a lot of people are getting out, some people in Baghdad have been there a long time, but they are getting less and less money really, considering the job they are being asked to do’. However, emphasising the constantly evolving nature of the private security industry he observed: ‘I always advise people to stay in [a security position] as long as they can, because with security as you see one door closing another country opens up’.

Post Iraq and the Maritime Boom

For many the opportunity that ‘opened up’ after Iraq was the growth in the security of international shipping following a rise in instances of piracy off the coast of Somalia in 2008-2009. Lawrence, a former officer in the British Army Airborne Brigade, worked for a company formed to deal with this threat:

‘The business really sprang up, as so many did, 4-5 years ago specifically to deal with the heightened threat of piracy. Predominantly Somalian based piracy in what is now known as ‘the High Risk Area’. Well over 200 companies are still actively involved in providing physical security against that particular threat. On a day-to-day basis that is placing armed guard teams on vessels as they move around the Indian Ocean and areas outside it. Physical security sits at the heart of it, but there is a lot of risk assessment, risk advice and training that goes with that.

In very practical terms the teams will board a vessel, normally outside the High Risk Area, they will spend some time working with the captain and the crew making adjustments to the physical security and the procedures on board that vessel so that when it enters the High Risk Area the ship’s captain is comfortable that what we [the security team] will do will not affect the overall management of the vessel; that he will still be in charge, but that we have given a significant amount of comfort to him and his crew as to how we would deal with an incident. That could involve the hardening of various parts of the vessel, ensuring that the ‘citadel’⁴⁴, the safe haven, is fully accessible and putting the crew go through some training.

Increasingly our clients are looking for a broader risk management capability. So the security of moving crews around the world, for instance when the crew fly into a country to join a vessel; how they get to the port, where they stay, how are they tracked, are they situationally aware of the environment they are in, do they need additional close protection to move

⁴⁴ The ‘citadel’ is an armored and secure area of a ship to which the ship’s crew will retreat if the ship is boarded. .

into that high risk area (as is very common currently for transits between Cairo and Suez)? So the risk umbrella we cover is not just from point-to-point on a ship's transit, but the security of crew from the point they leave the head office. Part of that also includes the provision of timely and active intelligence to enhance that service. Sometimes clients only take the intelligence bit even without the physical security. There are also a network of ancillary services that we cooperate with, medical service providers, evacuation transport providers etc.' (Lawrence)

Unlike the growth of land based security in Iraq and Afghanistan, the new practitioners of commercial maritime security entered into an established market place (that of maritime sea transport) that already had a considerable infrastructure of objective control in place. Risk management and corporate governance within the shipping industry were well-established, due in part to the experience that existed in the maritime industries of implementing the rules and norms of conduct on the high seas, as well as managing compliance across multiple national jurisdictions where ships docked and in whose waters they sailed.

Lawrence described compliance with these objective standards of control as one of the most important elements of the provision of services to the maritime industry, key to both the development of new business and the maintenance of existing client relationships. This range of objective control began with the type of compliance familiar to all businesses: 'good practice, financial good practice, environmental good practice standards. ISO 9001⁴⁵, 14001⁴⁶ etcetera' and extended to 'flag state compliance'- the process of ensuring that the status of individuals on board a vessel met the requirements of maritime law and those of the national jurisdictions in which security personnel found themselves operating:

'As part of that service, often not seen by the client, is all the legal flag state compliance that we have to adhere to, to deliver a credible service not just the route of a vessel from port to port, but the flag state of that vessel, what does that mean in terms of security? What [does a jurisdiction] allow and what do they not allow? The fact that that vessel may be owned by one party chartered by another party and then sub-managed by a third party, so you have got multiple stakeholders involved in that business.

⁴⁵ International Standards Organisation quality management standards.

⁴⁶ International Standards Organisation environmental management standards.

Understanding all of those dynamics is key.' (Lawrence)

Maritime security teams were routinely armed with military specification weapons (usually rifles, carbines and pistols). Lawrence described how the most important systems of objective control in a maritime environment related to the use and potential use of firearms:

'The ones that are more critical for the provision of services to our clients naturally come about from the fact that our business was predicated on some use or potential use of weapons. As soon as that is mentioned that throws everybody, Her Majesty's Government and everybody, into a flat spin⁴⁷. So the procurement of those weapons, the disposal of those weapons, the training of people on those weapons, the compatibility of ammunition, the servicing of those weapons and the movement of those weapons is all incredibly strictly controlled. At any stage the internal auditors, and indeed clients, do come in and go through these procedures. It is a key aspect of what they are looking at; how we control all elements of the use of weapons. The second part is the personnel: who is it that might have to pull the trigger on that weapon? Or who is it that makes a decision about a security situation regardless or not of whether a weapon was involved? (Lawrence)

Lawrence said that these standards were the subject of audit by a number of external bodies. In the case of his own company, a chief auditing function was carried out by the Lloyds Register (the LRQA), a quality assurance organisation associated with the Lloyds of London, the chief global provider of maritime insurance. However, he also highlighted that the company's clients would routinely audit the governance of staff selection and the management of weapons (often multiple times in any calendar month). Further, he considered that adherence to effective standards of objective control was reinforced by membership of certain industry associations; although he admitted that the role of voluntary industry associations in good governance was at best symbolic:

'Associations like SCEG⁴⁸ and SAMI⁴⁹ is less about their formal

⁴⁷ 'A flat spin' is a phrase used to describe panic or anxiety.

⁴⁸ SCEG is the Security in Complex Environments Group, a special interest group of the Aerospace Defence Security and Space Group. SCEG was formed in 2011 to 'define, develop and facilitate robust, internationally recognised professional standards for the UK private security sector operating abroad' (SCEG 2011).

⁴⁹ SAMI, The Security Association for the Maritime Industry.

accreditation. It's about how clients perceive these groups, and if you are a member of this body, there is a perception that you are a credible organisation. We would slightly argue that there are some companies who are members of these organisations that don't have those same standards. But a lot of clients, and their insurers, will look at them' (Lawrence)

Lawrence considered that the insurance industry has been a 'key driver' in the development of modern private security (Carmola, 2010:68-77) albeit he considered the influence of insurers to have been more direct and encompassing in the maritime security sector than in other industry areas. He attributed this to the existing framework of insurance surrounding international maritime freight transport:

'There are different elements to the insurance, there is the insuring of the hull, insuring of the cargo, insurance of the crew, so there are multiple different insurance interests for these vessels that move around the world. And given some of those well-known piracy incidents in 2008-2009 the P&I clubs⁵⁰ and the insurers were a major driver. [They determined] whether those shipping companies could move those cargoes from A-B. But also they decided who would be perceived as credible providers of security services that might reduce the insurance risk and therefore the clients' insurance premiums.' (Lawrence)

While the development of maritime security within an environment of more mature governance can be seen to effect the levels of objective control present in the sector, overall the constitution of the private maritime security company was remarkably similar to that of its land based counterpart. At the time of interview Lawrence's company employed 37 full-time corporate staff who worked within the 5 divisions of the company: operations, intelligence, commercial, administration and IT. He described some recent changes to the employee constitution of the company, with a limited move towards the employment of staff with a background in commercial shipping rather than the military. However, he insisted:

'The frontline security staff are former military personnel, predominantly Royal Marines or Special Forces or, to some extent, other parts of the

⁵⁰ P&I Clubs are mutual associations that provide protection and indemnity insurance to very serious risks such as war risk and damage to cargo during transit that traditional insurers would be unlikely to underwrite.

British military or former NATO troops who've got the right experience. [All frontline staff] also have to have various seaman's qualifications and have to have first aid qualifications. So at the sharp end that decision, that ultimate decision, on how a security incident is dealt with, and how force is used, is taken by those people who have got that very strong proven military background. The guidance, logistics support that might come from head office is predominantly ex-military, but now peppered with people who have other operational and logistics background and experience'. (Lawrence)

Significantly, despite operating in a more developed compliance environment, the maritime security industry has faced the same cycle of opportunity as that experienced by ground based security companies in Iraq. Lawrence described how the 'demographic' of maritime security contractors had begun to change:

'Initially the market place was predominantly driven by British Royal Marines, and to a lesser extent US naval personnel providing armed security on-board vessels. That demographic has changed significantly with Greek teams, East Europeans, Philipinos, Sri Lankans, Indians etc. And there are some security companies that provide just the former type, and some that provide just the latter type, and there are some that provide a variety of teams.' (Lawrence)

He observed that, with the perceived threat of piracy diminishing in some waters clients were less and less keen to pay the costs of armed physical security. This had led to pressure on the remuneration of maritime security contractors many of whom were leaving the industry, either to more lucrative contracts in other areas of private security or departing altogether. These pressures had led to a consolidation of the market, with smaller maritime security companies unable to sustain the cost of the infrastructure required to operate effectively and larger companies seeing a reduction of profitability.

As the employee constitution of private maritime security companies showed some evidence of transition so did the client base. Initially the industry catered predominantly to the major shipping fleets:

'The big players the Kuhn and Nagel, Maersk, Cosco, Hapag-Lloyd the CMAs the MSCs. These were fleets that would have high value cargo that was at risk or it was the physical makeup of the vessel that was at risk.'

(Lawrence).

This traditional client base had expanded with some evidence of a convergence with land based security companies in the provision of services to Oil and Gas majors and seismic exploration companies operating in hazardous areas. Maritime private security had also found a role in the protection of cruise liners and leisure fleets owned by large corporate bodies such as Disney and P&O. However, perhaps most significant was the increase of work associated with the protection of super-yachts owned by very 'high net worth' individuals and major corporations.

Lawrence's company was already diversifying away from reliance on maritime security contracts alone. In his words:

'We have gone from being totally focused on the maritime security sector to [being] a broader risk management business. In the last 6-12 months we've made some really positive steps as a company to develop that broader footprint in terms of our client base and expand the service offering because it's very, very clear that a private maritime security company that just stays doing what it is doing has got a certain life expectancy and certainly a diminishing financial return⁵¹

You will find that with terrorism and cyber security threats increasing and pressures on HM⁵² Government, the potential input of companies like ours into capacity building projects acting in support of HMG⁵³ is certainly an area of opportunity. Developing the capability of the Tanzanian navy or the Libyan coastguard, those are the sorts of projects that, whilst not new, British forces, particularly Special Forces have been at it for a while, will be an increasing focus on the private sector to take the lead on. It's a young industry; it's having to mature and grow very quickly and I'm sure it will look like something different in a few years.' (Lawrence)

Thus, the future, in both Lawrence and Roger's view was in increasing integration

⁵¹ In December 2015 a roundtable of international shipping associations and the oil companies' international marine forum reduced the size of the High Risk Area to reflect improvements in maritime security in areas of the Indian Ocean (Maritime Security Review, 2015). By April 2016 SAMI had gone into administration, having seen a halving of its membership numbers from a peak of 180 during the height of maritime industry concern over Somali Piracy (Maritime Security Review, 2016).

⁵² HM, Her Majesty's

⁵³ HMG, Her Majesty's Government.

and hybridisation of private security with state sponsored security sector reform, post-conflict capacity building and stability support operations, an aspiration that is increasingly being recognised in contemporary defence strategy (see Ares&Athena, 2017).

Toward Defining the Private Military Security Field

Craig's account of the 'the Circuit' provided a picture of a private security industry, initially operating with very limited numbers of active participants. Supply and demand within this market remained sufficiently stable to provide Craig employment for over 20 years. Access to this labour market was tightly controlled by the secrecy of the sector, restricted networks of potential clients and informal social control that limited employment to people with a specific professional background and disposition. Class divides, evident in the structure of 'the Circuit' have endured into the modern corporate security era. Former officers were disproportionately represented in commercial and entrepreneurial activity and more likely to be directly employed corporate representatives. By contrast, former soldiers and Non-Commissioned Officers predominated in the 'delivery' of operational security. They were more likely to conduct their work as contractors, to be employed through agencies or as freelance operators and to be remunerated on a 'piece-work' basis (Weisse, 2007). This insight provided an indication of the relative position of actors within the field in relation to their access to different forms of capital; former officers, with greater access to financial capital and greater social capital (but often possessed of less operational military experience⁵⁴) brokering commercial relationships that commoditise the greater operational expertise, or military 'capital', of the soldiery.

The constitution of work in the sector was 'nodal' (Johnston and Shearing, 2003; Shearing and Wood, 2003; Wood and Shearing, 2007), groups of individuals and organisations collecting together to resolve a specific security challenge or group of challenges. However, the constitution of the private military security sector during the era of 'the Circuit' ensured a tight, if unofficial, anchoring to the values

⁵⁴ Officers serve limited terms in UK Special Forces usually lasting three to four years.

and interests of the United Kingdom state; ‘gentlemen’s agreements’ with the FCO clearly implying a form of legitimacy to participants and to their actions. However, as the work of the sector became visible to a wider audience in civil society, this assumed legitimacy came under scrutiny and challenge.

The development of governance (Krahmann, 2003) across the private military security field was presented as the result of the (ostensibly misplaced) concerns of civil society organisations over the sector’s potential to create and foster abuses of human rights. As such, international human rights law (Sossai, 2016:239 and Katz and Maffai, 2016:228-237) was seen to have underpinned both civil society scrutiny of the sector and the development of the Montreux based standards of voluntary, or self-regulation (Braithwaite, 2000). This resulted in changes to client purchasing decisions that spurred changes to industry practice. Thus, the ‘behaviour modification’ function of governance (Hood et al. 2001 in Hutter, 2006:3) was most influenced by changes to procurement practices (Krahmann, 2016:249) that reflected the ‘pluralized’ ‘multi-stakeholder’ governance initiatives with which the industry engaged (Avant and Westerwinter, 2016:124 and De-Winter Schmitt, 2016). In the maritime sector, insurance was seen to have been central to the development of the industry and to have formed the framework through which its governance had developed (Ericson, 2003)⁵⁵. More traditional transgovernmental (Keohane and Nye, 1974) governance initiatives, such as the United Nations Article 47 and the ban on mercenary activity (Percy, 2016:222), were entirely absent from narratives describing the evolution of the sector. This was perhaps reflective of the failure of the UN to secure international support for its prohibitive stance on private military activity (De-Winter Schmitt, 2016:258), although the mercenary ‘norm’ (Percy, 2007b) did still influence constructions of acceptable and unacceptable conduct in the field (See Chapters 6 and 7). Thus, the emergence of the sector from ‘the Circuit’ into the corporate era was characterised by engagement with multi-stakeholder governance initiatives involving civil society organisations and industry practitioners, and driven by the norms and requirements of international human rights law and transnational

⁵⁵ Increasing stringency in procurement resulted in the more developed contracting and employment practices I describe in the maritime sector (see Chapters 5 and 6, and Krahmann, 2016:251 on ground based security).

insurance and reinsurance.

In Roger's description of the development of private security industry governance we can see the interplay of objective and subjective factors that gave rise to the 'structure' of the private military security field. Throughout this, industry actors have been central to the creation of 'norms' of behaviour within the sector through their participation in the establishment of systems of governance. Indeed the decision to engage in the creation of regulatory standards for the sector can be seen to have stemmed as much from the pressures of winning new business (and defending existing business) in the face of increasing bad publicity and societal scepticism, as from a subjective commitment to the values of civil society. In so doing former military actors were central to the creation of a 'field' of activity that perpetuated, through legitimation and cultural reproduction, the activity of former military actors; and was therefore, arguably, more 'doxic' (Bourdieu, 2000a) than transformative.

The participants' narratives of the private security sector incorporated both personal and contextual elements in explaining the evolution of the sector. Bourdieu described this as 'ontological complicity' (Bourdieu, 1990), interdependency between the subjective and objective, the habitus of the individual and the logic of their 'field', in the creation of a social reality. Indeed this concept sits at the heart of Bourdieu's theory of practice (Grenfell, 2012:44). From these narratives it is clear that the culture of private security described by the participants was not wholly a collective construction, or a 'shared consensus' in the tradition of Levi Strauss (Grenfell, 2012:45); neither was it purely a function of existing social infrastructure (how could it be in such an emergent industry). The cultures described by all participants were dynamic, changing to meet the needs of existing social systems with which they come into contact, in turn affecting and changing these social systems. This interplay, best conceived of as a Bourdieusian 'field', was congruent with Carmola's description of private security a 'protean' (Carmola 2010:12;38-39) and Abrahamson and Williams (2011) proposal that contemporary private security was constituted through the creation of transnational security 'assemblages', which themselves represented self-constituting social fields.

Accepting the applicability of field theory to analysis of the private military security we gain an insight into the structure and relationship between the fields that Roger, Craig, Mike and Lawrence described. In keeping with Bourdieu's concept we can see the overall field of United Kingdom private military security broke down into a series of sub-fields defined by the 'type' or '*distinction*' (Bourdieu, 1984) of security being conducted (protective security, maritime security, security consultancy, close protection, surveillance etc.) as well as the geographical area in which the security was enacted (i.e. ground based security in Iraq, or surveillance in the United Kingdom). All participants were active in multiple sub-fields each of which conformed, more or less, to the logic of practice in the broader field of private military security. However, each also had its own specific networks, relations, rules, norms and behaviours. A matrix of the sub-fields that my interviewees participated in is included at appendix D.

Analysis of this matrix provides a number of insights. Former Officers were disproportionately involved in the commercial aspects of security work⁵⁶ and more likely to be involved in commerce at a corporate level⁵⁷. Although most participants emphasised the 'international' nature of their work, there was a strong correlation between the work carried out in an international environment and that conducted in the United Kingdom. Prior experience, and certain types of state service were key to determining access to sub-fields of security both domestically and internationally. Actors with UK policing background for instance were more likely to orient their private security activity to the domestic market, while military actors tended towards international work. Former members of Special Forces units were involved in the greatest number of sub-fields within the industry⁵⁸. Participants involved with other specialist 'non green' (See Chapter 4) units, were the next most broadly active⁵⁹, with former members of conventional

⁵⁶ All former Officers interviewed in the study were involved in commercial aspects of the security business. By contrast, only eight out of 21 former NCOs conducted commercial work.

⁵⁷ Five of the six participants involved with commerce at a corporate level in larger more established firms were former Officers only one was a former NCO.

⁵⁸ Former Special Forces personnel were involved in a modal average of 12 fields and a mean average of 8.6 fields.

⁵⁹ Former-military interviewees who had not served in Special forces, but had experience in special intelligence, police specialist units and state intelligence/security agencies (i.e. non Special Forces organisations involved in the state's exceptional practices) were involved in a modal average of 6 fields and a mean of 7.1 fields.

military units the most restricted in their sub-field participation⁶⁰. While these trends were based on a sample size too small to draw any statistical inference from, they aligned with the qualitative description of the field provided by participants (see Chapters 6-8).

Since the era of 'the Circuit', the private military security sector had experienced a very considerable expansion of its field-to-field relations with other societal groups. Security in general, and military style armed security in particular, had become the concern of a more plural range of actors than at any time since the colonial era (Singer, 2003:35). The retention of private companies who could exercise potentially lethal force on behalf of non-state interests was a significant challenge to traditional societal norms, and as field theory demonstrates, this interaction will have changed not just the nature of private security, but also the nature of the commercial fields with which it interacted. The implications of this are explored in greater detail in Chapter 8 where I examine the relations of security practitioners with the elite corporations and high net worth individuals who, as new actors in 'the 'field of power' are replacing and integrating with the traditional 'state nobilities' of the modern era (Bourdieu, 1996b). Despite these changes, we see an industry that retains almost symbiotic relations with the state and, in particular the state's organs of security and intelligence. Here we see the potential that the growth of private military security has to alter the relationship between the private providers of coercive force and the state itself; themes I explore in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

That the military private security field had evolved over time was indisputable. 'The Circuit' era was one characterised by subjective control over values and behaviour within the sector. The pre and post-Iraq expansion of the industry created the requirement for more transparent structures of governance to be established leading in turn to changes in the nature of the field. The post-Iraq boom in maritime security saw the sector diversify into a field of activity that was already subject to a very developed structure of objective control necessitated by

⁶⁰ Interviewees with only conventional 'green army' experience and no service in Special Forces, Special Intelligence, police special units or intelligence and security services participated in a modal average of 4 fields and a mean of 4.8 fields.

the very specific environmental conditions of work at sea. But once again we have seen the sector move beyond the bounds of the limited provision of physical security to shipping and towards more 'holistic' and wide ranging 'risk management' activity; the commercial imperative, if nothing else, guaranteeing the continued search for new markets in which the skills of former military actors could be commoditised.

Within this exposition of field we can see a number of dynamics emerging. The first is the transitional nature of military security markets. Both ground based security in Iraq and Afghanistan, and global maritime security has seen a transition from the intensive employment of military personnel from Britain and other 'western' nations, to the employment of nationals with experience in, ostensibly, less developed national militaries as a result of market pressures. This highlights the changing relationship of different forms of capital within any emerging field of private security. This dynamic will be further explored in subsequent chapters as I analyse the forms of capital that former military actors bring to the field, and the relative relations of capital in the sale and provision of military style security.

While this Chapter focuses on the constitution of the fields in which private security actors operate and the objective measures of control present in those fields (rules, procedures, standards, certifications and codes of conduct), it is clear that subjective constraints on behaviour, the 'disposition' (Bourdieu 1984:167) of industry actors, is as important a factor as the 'rules' established to govern their behaviour. This disposition is best explored through an examination of a second important constituent of Bourdieu's field theory, that of habitus. Overwhelmingly the dispositions that most define the logic of the field of military private security were created in state military service and it is to these formative processes that I turn in the next Chapter.

Chapter 4 Being Military

The British military private security industry was understood by my interviewees to be a specialist-field of private security activity, based in the United Kingdom, but with an international focus. It was differentiated from domestic market security (manned guarding, door supervision and ‘celebrity’ body-guarding) less by the services it provided than by the former military nature of its participants, and the behaviours and practices they adopted in the conduct of their work. This ‘elite’ layer of the private security industry was presented as having developed from a kernel of specialist military expertise dominated by former members of the United Kingdom’s Special Forces community and the SAS Regiment in particular. As this field of military private security evolved, so opportunities increased for former soldiers with a broader range of military experience to gain employment in the field, with Iraq representing a ‘sea change’ that allowed the mass participation of soldiers from non-Special Forces backgrounds and, at times, had permitted involvement of participants with little or no military experience. However, this pluralisation was considered by many interviewees to have ‘diluted’ or compromised the nature of a field, which, at heart, was constituted to provide for the commodification and sale of specialist military expertise. As such, the quality of being military could quickly be identified as central to the participants’ construction of field. But what was it to be military, and why was this so significant to participation, access and conduct within the sector?

No accurate statistics exist for the number of former British military service people moving into the type of UK centric, transnational military security activity identified as the ‘field’ in which my participants engaged. White (2017:16) identified that only relatively few (2% of) public military veterans moved to ‘protective services occupations’⁶¹ (including private security management) in the UK on completion of their service. Overall service leavers transitioned into a wide variety of work across a number of industry sectors (White, 2017:17). Comparisons with data from the Transitions Mapping Review (Forces in Mind

⁶¹ This includes, police, police community support officers, fire service, prison service and ‘associate professionals’ that would include non ‘elementary’ security occupations (Office for National Statistics, 2010).

Trust, 2013) and Defence Personnel Statistics (Rutherford, 2014)⁶² made clear that, if my focus group assessments were accurate, it was probable a significant proportion of participants in military private security did not enter the sector directly following the termination of their military service, but instead after a period of time in civilian employment and/or unemployment (see Chapter 5). This raised a number of questions: why did only some military people choose to work in private military security? Why did they select this career when others did not? Why did people with military experience choose to work in military private security even after periods of civilian employment; and why, if the sector employed actors whose most recent work experience had been civilian, did those working in the sector see the activity they conducted as distinct from the broader field of private security and possessing a more military character?

The answers to these questions emerged most clearly in the importance that interviewees placed on the continuity between their military service and their private security work. The strength of this continuity was striking. Interviewees had been invited to take part in research that would examine their experiences of work in the private security industry. In each case the initial interview began by me asking them to provide, in their own words, a narrative of their career in private security. Even where interviewees had transitioned into private security following lengthy periods of civilian employment, all former regular service⁶³ interviewees began their narrative with a history of their prior military career, describing this as a primary and foundational phase of their journey towards their employment in private security.

In talking about their military service, the interviewees focussed on the acquisition of different types of skills, capacities and status similar in function to Bourdieu's 'field capital'. They viewed the possession of these capacities as

⁶² The Transitions Mapping review of 2013 (Forces in Mind Trust, 2013) provided evidence that 18,570 service people left the armed forces in 2009/2010, and a roughly equivalent number in 2012 (19,950). In 2009/2010 this would have resulted in 12,286 service people who had successfully completed military training leaving the military from across all services. Defence outflow numbers have remained consistent with a shrinking regular force (Rutherford, 2014) and show no significant increase that could, by itself, account for private military sector participation.

⁶³ i.e. full-time rather than Territorial Army service.

instrumental to their transition to private military security. Thus the 'field' of private military security was presented as a place where (predominantly) ex-military people practiced security in a manner that was, in some way, defined by their experience of military service. This was congruent with Bourdieu's characterisation of a 'field' of professional practice as activity that cohered around a 'common sense' logic, a way of doing and understanding things shared by field participants and created by an interplay of subjective and objective factors. Thus private military security was a place in which the logic and practices of the military influenced, informed and defined the way in which commercial security was conducted.

Despite this, the military person did not always 'fit' seamlessly into the field of commercial security provision. Mike, who had no military experience, but had worked as a senior executive and accountant with a number of private military security companies, described his role to be 'creating wealth' by reconciling the 'commercial imperatives of business with the cultural imperatives of the military'. He noted a number of characteristics that 'military people' displayed when working in a commercial environment, they were:

'Very ignorant when it came to commercial checks and balances – but reasonably fast learners. Some of them had a big issue with making a profit. They disapproved of it; they were uncomfortable making a profit. They hadn't made the mental step that this is a commercial organisation – it isn't an arm of the government. Others found it difficult to accept that budgets had placed constraints on them. They wanted to provide the Rolls-Royce solution but their notion of making money in the process was pretty limited.' (Mike)

Coupled with this relative commercial naiveté Mike observed that former soldiers 'always show more deference to their history than to their current situation'; with relations of status within the private military security office often determined more by previous service history than contemporary commercial acumen.

George, a former Police Officer also noted the importance of prior service history to the conduct of private security, in particular raising the manner in which highly gendered forms of behaviour, specific to the uniformed services, influenced operational decision making:

'We've got an industry which is very significantly based on the experiences that people have brought in from the cultures in their previous military or police backgrounds. One organisation I worked for there was a lot of conflict on the security access points because these guys are all ex-military and somebody touches the wrong button for them and, that's it, they kick off. That's why a lot of them get binned because they can't deal with it. [...] One thing I have a little bit of a problem with is egos, the macho image. It's a man thing you know, egos come into play. It goes back to these cultures that determine the private security industry.' (George)

Roger agreed that the transposition of military cultures into the commercial realm, created a tension between the commercial aims of private military security, and the cultural practices of the military; particularly those of elite military units. This had become a key concern for staff recruiting former service people. He candidly observed:

'We do not want any of their culture, none of it, because we recognise that to be harmful. The Parachute Regiment has a culture so does the Royal Marines. Mixing then is not a good idea because they bring their rivalries with them; at least not without a good dose of common sense from elsewhere spread amongst them.'(Roger)

One interviewee with experience predominantly in the management related aspects of private military security went further. Noting the preponderance of former Special Forces operators in the sector he stated:

'Special Forces are "special needs" – a lot of fucking prima-donnas; generalisation, [but] a lot of them are a pain in the arse – difficult to manage because they are used to being fairly maverick and not working within confines.' (Anon.)

Interviewees described a field that existed in a state of tension, the preponderance of ex-military actors, and the seminality of their experience was juxtaposed with evidence that elements of military culture were difficult to reconcile with the practices of commerce and the demands of 'civilianised' forms of security provision. Further, it was sector with which only some former service people would seek to engage. Thus, to understand the logic of commercial military security practices I needed to first examine the subjective dispositions, or

'habitus'⁶⁴ created by military service that my interviewees described as propelling them into private security work. Through this the 'unity hidden under the diversity and multiplicity of the set of practices performed in fields governed by different logics' (Bourdieu, 1984:95) could be explored and the manner in which military cultures influenced the conduct and evolution of private security understood.

The Military Habitus

Competence in Extremis: Physicality and Danger

Interviewees described their military service as having generated capacities and behaviours that were relevant to their subsequent employment in private military security. Primary among these was the experience of physical duress. Here interviewees focussed on periods of arduous physical exercise during military training where they had been expected to reach high standards of physical fitness and to endure a range of challenging physical conditions including sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme weather, forced marching and running with heavy loads (Hockey, 2002). However, these expressions of physicality did not stand alone as a category of meaning, in all cases the experience of arduous physical training was coupled with the fulfilment of other military tasks and functions; as Nick a former infantryman and Special Forces soldier observed:

'It's not just knowing the skills. It's knowing them when you are wet and tired and exhausted...when somebody else is trying to kill you...it's got to be second nature, so you don't think about it, that's the difference. You only get that by proper hard training. It's a thing I noticed about the police. They have some great shooters and drivers, it's all they do, they practice a lot, [but] they don't have to do all the other stuff that we do. Technically they are very good; but they don't do it when they have been awake for 3 days,

⁶⁴ Bourdieu used the concept of 'habitus' to describe the subjective element of relations between actors within a 'field'. In his work *The Logic of Practice* he described the subjective 'dispositions' (Bourdieu 1990:53) that determined how individuals saw the world, reacted to stimuli, conducted themselves, and decided their preferences. This 'internal structure' had an 'embodied' nature that was generated through historical experience and, once generated determined individual choice (Bourdieu, 1993:22).

or when they have tabbed⁶⁵ 20K, when they are on they're on their chinstrap⁶⁶ and can't think. That's the difference – it's a different mind-set, total commitment' (Nick)

Physicality was presented as something specific to the military experience but important only in as much as it underpinned the performance of other military functions. Thus, this notion incorporated not just a developed level of bodily performance, but a mental resilience and acuity (Hockey, 2009) that allowed the enactment of critical skills and knowledge in circumstances of adversity.

Together with physicality, exposure to danger featured prominently in almost all interviewees' discussion of their military past⁶⁷ (Hale, 2008; Higate, 2003; Hockey, 2003; Woodward and Winter, 2007). Many talked, at times movingly, of their personal experience of injury and of the inevitability of witnessing the death or injury of colleagues. The violence associated with the military profession was presented as a phenomenon less to be controlled and overcome than to be accepted and accommodated. Terry, a paratrooper with experience of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan discussed his attitude towards being mortared:

'I just wasn't too bothered about it and people were running and getting under the cover and I was just sitting on my bed watching DVD's. I thought to myself if it's going to hit, it's going to hit, doesn't matter where you're standing.' (Terry)

Expressions of mortality and danger were not limited to the sphere of conflict or the exclusive result of violence by an enemy. The physical danger of military training and the potentially harmful results of military institutionalisation were expressed with a similar frequency. Stuart, describing his experience of serving with an infantry battalion in Northern Ireland, presented suicide as a routine

⁶⁵ 'Tabbed' or 'tabbing' is derived from the abbreviation for 'tactical advance to battle'; to 'tab' is to march at a fast pace towards contact with the enemy. The expression denotes a fast paced march during which troops may alternate between a walking and running pace while carrying weapons and equipment.

⁶⁶ 'Chinstrapped' or 'to be on your chinstrap' is military slang for being exhausted. It evoked the image of the marching soldier's head being so bowed by fatigue that the chinstrap of their helmet will touch the floor.

⁶⁷ The interviewees Kevin (whose military experience was part-time rather than full time), Mike, William and Lawrence, (whose roles in the private security industry were commercially rather than operationally oriented) did not discuss physical danger or mortality in relation to their military past.

hazard of military life: 'Oh yeah there's been a lot of it, I was in Omargh⁶⁸ in '91, two and a half years we was there and we had about 5 suicides'. In addressing, seemingly without rancour, the violence of the military system to the individual, Stuart implicitly affirmed that he was able to endure circumstances where others had 'cracked' in the face of the subordination of the needs of the individual to those of the institution. In this, Stuart presented military culture less as a form of 'victimhood' (McGarry and Walklate, 2011) than possessed of an 'otherness' the essence of which was 'superior in both dignity and power' to the 'profane' concerns of civilian life (Durkheim 1965:2). Thus a 'tolerance' (or even enjoyment) of exposure to mortal risk was a capacity important in the transition to private military security employment and access to the sector.

Doing What Others Won't: Radical Professionalism and Dirty Work

While physically embodied capability was the dominant capacity inculcated by military service, this was, with equal frequency expressed as underpinning the concept of military 'professionalism'. 'Professionalism' incorporated meaning that extended beyond embodied physical competence and contained within it an ethical dimension. Andrew, a former senior NCO with experience of special intelligence operations in Northern Ireland, Africa and the Balkans explained:

'When you are in the mob [army] you do what you have to do, it's not really a matter of if it is right or wrong, you do it. You just have to be professional; you have to do your job as well as you can. That's what counts.' (Andrew).

For Andrew 'professionalism' incorporated a form of moral boundarying, where excellence in the commission of the act of soldiering superseded consideration of moral responsibility. These 'higher order' considerations, where they were discussed, were constituted as the preserve of 'others' (usually policy makers or senior officers). This construction was akin to the 'radical professionalism' of Larson (1974); described by Nuciari (2003:70) as a type of 'institutional professionalism that is orientated towards total organisation' and 'isolated by civilian society because of its high functional specificity and political neutrality'.

⁶⁸ A City in Northern Ireland with a permanent garrison of British Army.

This divergence between the values of military professionalism as conceived of by interviewees, and the social values of the parent society was reinforced by the recognition that military work, in some of its forms attracted moral opprobrium. This was most acute in relation to practices surrounding the use of violence and coercive force⁶⁹ particularly in the civil conflict in Northern Ireland where, Andrew observed:

‘You just didn’t talk about what you did with people you didn’t know, or even sometimes with your family. Nowadays it’s a bit different because, with Afghan⁷⁰ and that, the army is a bit more popular, and what people see on videos and social media, they know a bit more. Still it’s not quite polite conversation’ (Andrew).

Nigel, a former infantryman, highlighted that the risk of moral opprobrium was not restricted to the practice of violence alone, but extended across a spectrum of military conduct:

‘Some of the things we do in the military, even normal things, if you actually explain them to a civvie⁷¹ they’d look down on you. I did an exercise in Belize and we had to do a CTR⁷², I’d just got into recce platoon⁷³ and I was all piss and vinegar⁷⁴, we spent 4 hours crawling up this storm drain to get to the target, and in Belize they have a lot of open sewers so it was full of shite and, we were heaving⁷⁵ by the time we finished, but we got the recce⁷⁶ done. So I get home and I’m telling some friends about, you know, look what a fucking professional I am, and this one girl just looks at me like I’m a pooch⁷⁷ who’d just shat on her best Persian rug... I was young (laughs), its lucky it was her friend I was interested in.’ (Nigel)

⁶⁹ Penny Dick (2005) observes a similar dynamic when interviewing Police Officers about their use of coercive force. Woodward and Jenkins (2011:261), in their analysis of situated accounts of British military personnel, highlight the sense incongruity expressed by one participant on viewing photographs of a colleague his wife warmly greeting a colleague at a reunion. The interviewee observes that this colleague had ‘IRA kills to his name’ and opines that this violent history would cause unease among those outside the military ‘family’.

⁷⁰ Bernard Boëne observes similar changes in public sentiment towards the military noting that ‘the respect that surrounds them [the military] contrasts sharply with the vocal disrespect of a quarter century ago’ (Boëne 1998:181)

⁷¹ Civilian

⁷² CTR, Close Target Reconnaissance, the covert observation at close range of a potential enemy location.

⁷³ The platoon in an infantry Battalion responsible for reconnaissance.

⁷⁴ Slang for ‘aggressive energy’

⁷⁵ Slang for ‘very dirty’

⁷⁶ Reconnaissance

⁷⁷ Slang for ‘dog’

In Nigel's narrative the 'dirty work' construction (Hughes, 1958; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) was in evidence. Penny Dick (2005) described the way in which individuals engaged in 'dirty work' used 'front' and 'back' region narratives to manage the potential reaction of people unfamiliar with the nature of their work. It was evident that Nigel's inexperience caused him to feel stigmatised when he incautiously expressed the 'real' nature of military work to an uninitiated audience. Despite this, he did not present this story as warranting sympathy; using profanity, humour (and masculine hyper-sexuality) to ensure the listener understood that his military 'spirit' remained unbowed. The acceptance by the military actor that the nature of their work meant that their personal character was the subject of pejorative moral judgment, served to reinforce that military service was carried out within its own discrete moral universe; a space in which constructions of professionalism and gender were mobilised to both condition and justify practice. Thus, preparedness to carry out acts that others may consider unpleasant or undignified emerged as a relevant capacity when choosing to engage in private military security activity and in selection for employment in the sector.

The Military as a Folk Economy

As narratives of physicality and embodied knowledge underpinned notions of professionalism, narratives of mortality and physical danger underpinned the personal relationships experienced in military service. Potential exposure to death and physical injury were presented as foundational to the close bonds of friendship commonly described by participants. Terry, discussed his feelings when, as a result of injuries sustained in Helmand Province he was restricted to administrative duties in a headquarters location:

'I desperately wanted to get out with the blokes, seeing them come in and out and I thought to myself "this is it for me". I joined the Army, and joined the regiment I was in, to do what I love doing, and as mad as that sounds, [that is] being in a war environment. A lot of people ask me why, and it's not that I enjoy war; it's just that...I think it's all to do with brotherhood if you like; the men that you can trust and work with... loyal friends that have, [on] many occasions, put their life on the line to rescue not only myself, but other blokes and suffered the consequences.' (Terry)

The strength of the emotional connection with military colleagues was expressed by a majority of participants. However, while it was clear that enduring traditional friendships did emerge from military service, the relationship between service people was described as having a different quality:

‘It’s not like you ‘liked’ [gestures with ‘air quotes’] everybody in the battalion. Certainly not in my battalion, there were blokes who hated each other. There was more than one night you’d come in and there’d been a fight in the mess or whatever. But when you’re in the field you’d still share your rations or your water or your kit with them if needs be, your average civilian wouldn’t do that. If they were in trouble down town you wouldn’t just walk past, its not really to do with whether you like them.’ (Nigel)

Participants described relationships within the military that could coexist charged with antipathy and antagonism on one level, but suffused with obligation, respect and even affection on another. Woodward and Jenkins observed this phenomenon when they described the ‘fictive kinship’ of their military interviewees (Woodward and Jenkins 2011:261), proposing an invented affiliation that created kinship bonds that replaced the cosanguineal and affinal relations of the traditional family. John Hockey in his ethnography of British Army infantry soldiers (Hockey, 2003:19)⁷⁸ adopted a different interpretation, proposing that constructions of military kinship can be seen to have a quality based on conditioned group solidarity, while Carol Cohn (1999) observed similar narratives of ‘bonding’ and intimacy as facet of the military in popular culture. Under any interpretation, it is clear that military service was seen to create relationships that transcended in importance and gravity the relationships of civilian life.

These close personal bonds were reinforced by a communal approach to property and material ownership that contrasted sharply with civilian practices. Craig, a former member of UK Special Forces had studied marketing before joining the military, he observed:

‘I knew about accountancy and profit and the likes of that before I joined, but obviously then when I joined the army, I just wasn’t interested in

⁷⁸ Hockey describes Non Commissioned Officers deriding a trainee soldier on exercise for his ‘selfishness’ in not sharing his cigarette with other members of his training platoon

money anymore. It wasn't part of the game.' (Craig).

A number of participants identified that their transition into the military was caused in part by a general ambivalence towards materialistic culture. Kate, a former officer with experience in a variety of military organisations, including Special Forces stated:

'What made the military attractive? What I didn't want to do was 'make a profit' because money doesn't really motivate me. I have to have a bit of money but I didn't want to do a profit and loss job, and that got picked up every single interview. On most job interviews I got to the final stages and then it was identified. I wasn't really passionate enough about making money. [I joined the army] so I could run around, I didn't have to sit in an office. I was very naive.'(Kate)

Thus, the norms of financial and material transaction in military culture were described as fundamentally different from those prevailing in civilian society. While rank and unit organisation were described as providing a structural framework for day-to-day existence, military experience; a composite construction of exposure to danger, physical duress and professional competence provided the capital of many interactions. One participant who had served in the Falklands conflict observed:

'It [experience] makes a difference, when I went to depot⁷⁹ people would always listen to you because of what you had done. No matter what the rank, you had done it for real. You never had any problem getting the cooks to do you an extra portion of 'bubble'⁸⁰ with your breakfast when they knew where you had been. Little things, you got messed around less when you'd hand over a quarter⁸¹. You get treated better as you go up the ranks; but certainly I found it made more of a difference when people knew you'd been down South⁸².' (John)

In material terms the structured bureaucratic communalism of the military, coupled with the informal economy of somatic experience meant that participants viewed military life as a 'folk economy' (or 'economy of good faith', Bourdieu, 2000b), possessions often held in common for the good of the group and

⁷⁹ Training Depot, a facility where young soldiers or officers are trained.

⁸⁰ 'Bubble', bubble-and-squeak, a dish made from fried vegetable leftovers.

⁸¹ 'A quarter' is the accommodation provided to military families by the Army.

⁸² 'Down South' the Falklands conflict of 1982 in the South Atlantic.

transferred on the basis of need rather than individual ownership. Indeed Hockey (2003:19) identified this communal attitude towards belongings as central to the construction of identity within the combat arms of the British military.

When coupled with evidence of participants' strong constructions of kinship, this material communalism took on a different significance. Paul James, drawing upon the work of Bourdieu, described customary tribalism as, 'The framing condition of a certain kind of community in which persons are bound beyond immediate family ties by the dominance of modalities of face-to face and object integration, including genealogical placement, embodied reciprocity and mythological enquiry' (James, 2006). The 'fictive kinship' observed by Woodward and Jenkins can be reinterpreted as analogous to the 'practical kinship' of tribal cultures observed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977:37); the basis of which is in continually rehearsed customs of interpersonal solidarity rather than affection, consanguinity or marriage.

Tribes: Cultures, not Culture

Despite this, the perceived 'otherness' of military culture should not be mistaken for homogeneity. A universally expressed sentiment was that the military was 'not one culture' but instead 'a lot of tribes' (Dan) each carrying out different roles and, often deliberately, adopting divergent norms and behaviours to differentiate themselves from other groups within the military⁸³. This plurality of cultures was considered to be both a peculiarity and strength of the British Army and extended to both the professional aspects of the serviceperson's role and to their 'off duty' behaviour. Ross, a former member of UK Special Forces described his experience of training soldiers from a variety of infantry units in the techniques of jungle warfare:

'Even in something as singular as the infantry I noticed there were big differences between units. A classic example was the Jungle warfare instructor course. There was a large proportion of Gurkhas⁸⁴, a large

⁸³ The 'tribal' nature of the military organization in the British Army has been commented upon by a number of Scholars (von Zugbach 1988; Beevor 1990 and Burk, 2018)

⁸⁴ Soldiers of Nepalese ethnicity recruited into the British Army.

proportion of Paras⁸⁵ a large proportion of Marines⁸⁶ and then the other element was made up entirely of Guards⁸⁷: Senior NCOs and officers. The ability and the approach of the Guards to the Paras to the Marine... there were 3 different approaches. I can simplify it; effectively the Guards even their senior NCOs did not know how to think for themselves, you know there was no kind of initiative. The officer, we used to call him “Captain A-frame⁸⁸” because every time he built an A-frame it collapsed ‘cos he was so used to having everything done for him. The Paras: What you tended to find was the officers were difficult to differentiate them from the guys. They were certainly far more undisciplined than most. One night for example they broke into the bar and got drunk. I remember when we got to a stream they were the first ones going over the waterfall backwards (laughs) but they were very professional in the field, no two ways about it. Whereas the Marines were, what we used to call, the “thinking man’s Para”; they had that same level of professionalism but probably were a little bit more thoughtful on how they applied it’ (Ross)

Ross indicated the manner in which different units, all responsible for a similar conventional infantry role, displayed very different dispositions towards risk, discipline, authority, initiative, competence and transgression.

The subculture of units in which interviewees had served was a key determinant of their disposition and motivation to engage in private security following their military service. The overwhelming majority of my interviewees had served in ‘teeth arm’ units (Macdonald 2004:124) where ‘hot’ (Soeters, Windslow and Weibull, 2003:247), or front-line, experience was an element of their role. This aligned with Caforio’s proposal that combat oriented elements of the military displayed ‘institutional’ values while support functions, that were more technical and administrative in nature, displayed a more ‘occupational’ character. He observed, “These two subsystems express different kinds of rationality and are not easily compatible. They are in fact characterised by two different ethics, one diverging in respect to civilian society, the other converging’ (Caforio 1998b:63). Thus the foundation of military experience relevant to the transition to military

⁸⁵ Soldiers of the Parachute Regiment.

⁸⁶ Commandos of the Royal Marines, part of the United Kingdom Navy.

⁸⁷ Cavalry and Foot Guards regiments that form the Household Division. These military units have the historical status of the Monarch’s household guards. They possess an elite military status and are renowned for the elevated social standing of their Officers.

⁸⁸ An ‘A-frame’ is a structure constructed as part of a jungle shelter from which the soldier suspends their hammock and mosquito protection the construction of which is a core jungle survival skill.

private security was overwhelmingly aligned with the cultures of front-line, combat oriented sub-units the values of which tended towards divergence, rather than convergence with the values of civil society.

Being Elite

The divergence between military and civil values was most acute in the subcultures of elite military units, just as service in these units provided the most direct path, and richest foundation of personal capital for the transition into private military security. While experience in conventional elite units, (such as airborne or commando) was significant, experience of service in 'special' designation units associated with unconventional warfare (i.e. Special Forces and special intelligence) had particular relevance due both to the nature of this type of service and the centrality of former Special Forces actors to the development of the private military security industry.

The transition into Special Forces required the service person to undergo a very demanding process of physical and psychological testing (usually referred to as 'selection'). All participants who had served with Special Forces units, and most who had been engaged in special intelligence, had chosen to make this transition voluntarily and expressed a number of motivations for so doing. Some described undertaking selection as the natural consequence of their personal commitment to embodied military professionalism:

'It was really the running that did it for me. I had joined the regimental cross-country team when I was a junior soldier. I enjoyed the physical side of soldiering, so going for selection was natural. I was already in a Commando unit, so selection was just the next step.' (Victor)

For others the decision was influenced by the increased accessibility of operational roles where their military skills could be validated against a real enemy:

'When you go through a lot of training and then find out that all you are expected to do is sit in a garrison in Germany its frustrating. So I suppose part of it was to get out where the action was, see things that you wouldn't otherwise get to do, use your skills for real' (Stuart)

However, the transition was also expressed as a reaction to the rigid and authoritarian structures of conventional, or 'green army' existence.

'It was the bullshit that made me do it. I can remember some snotty little Rupert⁸⁹ coming around the troop lines after we had been in the field for a week and giving out extra duties for dirty kit. I thought fuck this; I'm not having this. I think the [SAS] regiment is more democratic than other units. Everybody's voice gets listened too, sometimes too much so. But it suited me better. I don't regret it.' (Victor)

The nature of Special Forces service was seen to have a different quality to that of soldiering in conventional army units. Participants considered that Special Forces and special intelligence work involved greater autonomy in decision-making, but also a greater expectation of rationality and judgement:

'When you are in a regular unit, usually you have a specific task. It's passed down to you through the organisation. It's quite controlled. You are working within a structure. If something goes wrong there are other people to deal with it. With SF⁹⁰ you have to show more initiative more awareness. Often you are very isolated; so if you make a bad decision it will have an effect on you and the people you are working with, whether that is other members of the team or locals that you are working with. You have to be more strategic, more thoughtful. That's why SF soldiers tend to be a bit older. You have to have that experience.' (Jack)

The nature of the Special Forces mission, oriented towards operations conducted within a battle-space controlled by the enemy, carried with it the expectation that members of these units would be exposed to an increased risk of capture. The strategic orientation of Special Forces action further required that soldiers were able to limit the amount of exploitable intelligence that an enemy organisation could extract from them in the event of their capture. This training was called resistance to interrogation (R-to-I) and was identified as one of the defining elements that distinguished Special Forces and Special Intelligence 'operators' from conventional 'green army' soldiers.

⁸⁹ 'Rupert' is mildly pejorative slang for an officer.

⁹⁰ SF, Special Forces.

Kate, described Special Forces training, and 'R-to-I' in particular, as incorporating a qualitatively different level of physical and mental duress⁹¹ to that which she had experienced during her 'green army' career:

'Physically it was a shock, not just the marching, but being beaten as part of the training in 'R-to-I'. It doesn't bother me physically – probably this is how people pass, its mind over matter. It is your mind being able to control the pain of your body. We did two lots of R-to-I. The first one was the normal one and the second was specific to Ireland⁹². On the first one they would line you up and you would go into the chamber to go forward for processing and we had guys refusing. The four guys in front of me just put their hand up and said "I don't want to do this": and you're like "you haven't even got there yet", and they were like "no I can't do it". One was a Para one was a Marine and the other two were infantry types who are meant to be these warrey⁹³ roughty-toughty, definitely stronger than me physically but their brains, their minds were not strong enough. So I think that's the difference because eventually the physical side of it all evens itself out. When we are at peak fitness we are all about the same; but what takes you the next step is your brain, whether you can make your mind control pain. I think that women are often good at it. That's not to say men aren't, but just to say all the women sailed through the resistance to interrogation training.' (Kate)

Thus Special Forces training exposed soldiers to substantially greater levels of physical and psychological duress, including levels of direct physical violence that would not normally form a recognised part of conventional military training. This level of physical brutality (i.e. 'beating') was a sanctioned exception to normal training standards, and was justified through the need to create in the trainee Special Forces soldier an embodied identity of greater physical and mental resolve and dependability than that required of 'conventional' service personnel.

The exceptional nature of the Special Forces role was described as extending beyond the physical and mental duress of training. The danger of death or injury

⁹¹ The physical duress of Special Forces selection was commonly referred to in terms of a 'transcending' experience where the superiority of psychological resilience over basic physical conditioning was realized.

⁹² During Kate's service the Conduct After Capture Wing (CAC Wing) of the Joint Services Intelligence Organisation (JSIO) provided two forms of resistance to interrogation training. The first dealt with capture in a conventional war scenario and involved techniques designed to minimise the release of exploitable information throughout the period of captivity, and until release. The second dealt with capture by terrorist groups in Northern Ireland where there was little expectation of eventual release.

⁹³ 'Warrey', lit. War-ry, liking or enthusiastic about war.

in Special Forces operations was presented as more acute than that of conventional military service:

‘The Danger of operations in an SF environment is different to the danger of operations in a ‘green army’ environment. Often, for us [Special Forces] it was quite dangerous because we were in a role where we were on our own in terrorist territory, in IRA land. I operated on my own a lot of the time; so, yeah dangerous in terms of you are operating on your own against an enemy that is unseen. If they are ‘gonna get you’ they are ‘gonna get you’. You would have to either fight your way out of it or talk your way out of it (which was not ever going to work)... or get through it.’ (Kate)

Former members of Special Forces described experiencing danger both more acutely and with greater frequency than during conventional military service. As with other participants, this continued exposure to danger manifested itself in risk normalisation. Thus, the Special Forces and special intelligence roles could be seen to epitomise the most extreme constructions of physicality, embodiment, danger and mortality described by soldiers more generally.

Special Forces exhibited a similar plurality of culture to that of conventional military units although their ‘tribal’ exclusivity was, if anything, more intense. The reification of culture expressed by participants was evident at Squadron or detachment rather than Battalion level (as was common in conventional forces). Ross described the differences in attitudes toward violent behaviour off-duty between different squadrons in the 22nd SAS Regiment:

‘[There were differences of culture] even within the Regiment. I worked with G Squadron⁹⁴ and B Squadron. In G Squadron most of their officers tend to be drawn from the Guards, so anybody who is a Guards officer who passes selection goes into G squadron. Even when you’d go out for a few drinks everyone was well behaved. There were certain kinds of expected behaviours, and if you did misbehave you could probably expect to be RTUd⁹⁵.

I then went across to B Squadron. I got into a bit of bother [in Cyprus]; to cut a long story short I found myself in the middle of bar-fight. We sorted ourselves out and dusted ourselves off. We headed back to the camp. We

⁹⁴ A Squadron is a sub-unit of the SAS comprising approximately 65 soldiers.

⁹⁵ RTU’d is ‘returned to unit’, discharged from Special Forces and returned to service in the soldier’s parent conventional unit.

were about two miles from where we were based and we were relying on the RAF to give us a lift and there was an old guy, about 50 odd, who was a corporal who said “look fellas I’ll get the Land Rover” if you wait here for a bit. I was sat there chatting to him and there was an RAF lad who was a parachute packer. He was a big lad, he joined the RAF Rugby team to play the New Zealanders and he had drunk too much. He started giving this poor old corporal a hard time. Because I was the senior NCO there I thought I should be responsible so I said “come on son calm down a little bit he’s doing his best, he’s helping us out”; at which point he grabs hold of me, so I slammed him up against a wall and he turned around and fell down. All I could see from the back of his head was a pool of blood and I thought, “I’ve killed him” (laughs).

We called an ambulance and they took him away and I woke up the next morning with a bit of a hangover thinking “I’ve just ruined my career- what have I done”; fully expecting to be RTU’d, because that’s what I would have expected with G Squadron. I was trying to avoid my boss all day, and sooner or later I bumped into him. He had a big grin on his face and I realised; there is something wrong here, this is not the behaviour that I am expecting. And to cut a long story short, it turns out that half of B Squadron had been in punch-ups that night because B Squadron tended to be your ex-Paras they had a totally different culture. It was very much more maverick, if somebody was going to mess about it was going to be B Squadron. And so within the Regiment you had G Squadron who were very precise and you had B Squadron who were the other extreme. But there is a good example of how even within the Regiment you had different cultures within the squadrons.’ (Ross).

Kate, worked closely with a number of United Kingdom Special Forces units and perceived differences in unit culture through their attitudes towards their inclusion of women in operational roles:

“There were different cultures within Special Forces. I have very fond memories of working with the SAS. I have very few fond memories of being with the Detachment⁹⁶. At that time there were two to three different types of Special Forces, the Special Boat Service, Special Air Service and 14 Int⁹⁷. Generally 14 Int was blokes that couldn’t get in the SAS; so they went that way as a second choice. They really didn’t like women being in [the unit] because it sort of emasculated them in some respects, so they always had

⁹⁶ ‘The detachment’, or ‘The Det’ refers to 14 Intelligence Company, a Special Forces organisation specialising in covert surveillance activity. In 2005 14 Intelligence Company became the Special Reconnaissance Regiment.

⁹⁷ ‘14 Int’ is 14 Intelligence Company (see above).

this chip on their shoulder. Whereas for the women it didn't matter because we could never get in the SAS anyway, so actually we never carried that chip on our shoulder. We used to work very closely with the SAS and we always got on well with those boys because they never saw us as a threat, we were just an enhancement to their operation. I could get them into places that they couldn't get into themselves – or I could take them in and then, with me, we could get more information. The Detachment blokes never saw it like that. They always saw it as us [women] pinching their work; more of a threat to them – not all of them but a proportion of them. Most of them were OK. The thing was that [they thought] we weren't physically strong enough. I mean, I could shoot better than most of them. They knew that, and so constantly the thing was, "well you're not strong enough. If I got shot you couldn't pick me up and carry me"; no you're right I probably couldn't but neither could he, or he and he. Physicality is a big thing in Special Forces.'

This divergence of culture was evident in both the formal regimes of training and operations, and the conduct of personnel outside the workplace. Kate's gender brought into stark focus the difference between normative behaviour in conventional military units and that of Special Forces, where hostility towards women soldiers was markedly greater:

'They were ghastly; the chauvinism and misogyny, I have never seen anything like it. You would not get that in the green army. They were allowed to get away with it because of the unit that they were. Some of the blokes behaved extraordinarily badly. Within a military context [there was] a lack of discipline, lack of respect, lack of any sort of cordial behaviour towards myself and [female colleagues], which I found surprising given that we were a military unit run by military law; and if you had behaved like that in the green army you would have been courts marshalled potentially – some of the things that they did...' (Kate)

This transgressive culture extended beyond sexual harassment and, in some cases manifested as violent criminality that, nonetheless went unchecked because of the elite and secretive nature of the unit's work. Talking of a soldier in the Special Forces surveillance unit Kate described:

'He used to go home at weekends and beat his wife up. He lived in [a garrison town], every leave period the RMPs⁹⁸ would be called to the house. He

⁹⁸ RMP, Royal Military Police.

would be put in jail for the night to cool off. It was well documented in [the] Garrison that he was beating his wife. He would come back to the unit and we would all say, "oh god he's been beating her up again". She refused to press charges which is often the case; but the unit knew about it and frankly that's 'conduct unbecoming', you cannot have that behaviour, that's showing aggression that's showing temper, it's showing a lack of conduct that I would expect of a Special Forces soldier. If they are behaving like that in their private life what are they going to do on the ground in their work? And the hierarchy never disciplined that guy. He was never brought to task about it because in [the garrison] it was like: "oh you know he's in the special unit". And when he came back over [to Ireland] the officers had no moral courage, they were scared of the soldiers and let them get away with stuff that I personally disagreed with.

There was a difference between social life of SF and green army. You definitely got more harassment, definitely. I mean its weird now when I look back on it and I hear my civilian friends talking about harassment at work. I can't believe I even put up with it. You're harassed all the time, constantly. Inappropriate sexual advances. Not for me, not physical stuff. It was always inappropriate sexual comments. But when you are in the military you know what it's like, it's banter. I've been to an officer's mess dinner night where there were only two women there. When one guy it was like, "Oh come on Kate to you fancy going off outside in the car park?" It was like... no! What are you talking about? He was a major Special Forces. [I asked him] "are you serious?" [He replied] "Well I thought I'd ask." What? (exasperation). The guy from that night went on to pin another girl up against the wall and put his hand up her skirt. Inappropriate behaviour.

[Harassment and abuse] was normally around dinners and alcohol. You know [a senior NCO] in my first job said, "we could have an affair, nobody would know about it. We could meet in a hotel and...", what? (exasperation). And it was one of those [times when you think]; am I leading him on? Have I said something to lead him on? I have had about four conversations with the bloke on a professional level and he had obviously given it some thought. It was constant. That's not 'cos I think I am attractive. It's just all women have suffered that.

Looking back I hardly think about it [the harassment]. The only time I think about that is within the NI⁹⁹ context. Because there were a couple of very bad things happened and they were never disciplined. Three blokes [allegedly conducted a serious sexual assault on a woman] and they were

⁹⁹ Northern Ireland

never disciplined for it; and it was all caught on camera and they destroyed the pictures. That sort of behaviour in NI that's why I find it very difficult to forgive that management team at that time. (Kate)

Thus, while the autonomy of Special Forces and special intelligence operations required greater maturity and rationality from practitioners, it is clear that the elite status and secrecy surrounding 'non-green' army service led, in some units, to a criminogenic environment where serious sexual violence and harassment was accepted and, possibly, encouraged as part of the culture. These transgressive behaviours were considered less likely to have been sustainable in conventional units operating with more transparency, greater objective control and less impunity. Kate linked this (at times violent) sexism with the elite status of the unit in which she served, and the relative professional frustration (or un-fulfilment) that some members of this 'second tier' organisation displayed; an emotion that was more acutely experienced in the highly competitive Special Forces environment.

While Kate was my only woman interviewee, and caution must be exercised before assuming that her experience is widely replicated, her narrative accords with the, relatively few, studies of domestic abuse within the British Military (Grey, 2016; Godier and Fossey, 2018). Williamson (2012) and Williamson and Price (2009) 'did not find high levels of self-reported domestic violence and abuse' in conventional military units (Williamson, 2012:1385). Williamson's survey data indicated that domestic abuse, when reported, led to arrest in more than two-thirds of cases (Williamson, 2012:1381). This accords with Kate's assertion that, in non-Special Forces units, domestic abuse and sexual violence would, usually, be met by a disciplinary response. Grey's (2016) study of British military family members who had experienced or perpetrated abuse, and support workers engaged with military families, provides a useful insight into the qualitative nature of abuse in the British military context. She identifies that 'militarised enactments of the public/private divide play a role in shaping experiences of domestic abuse' (Grey, 2016:2). In Kate's narrative we can see how the exaggerated 'privacy' created by the secrecy that surrounded Special Forces facilitated the suppression of evidence of domestic abuse and sexual violence, subordinating the safety of

women soldiers and family members to the maintenance of the elite unit's 'operational effectiveness' (Grey, 2016:8).

Gender and Exception

The centrality of embodied knowledge and identity, and the language used by participants to describe their military past, brought into focus the gendered nature of military service. While the military has long been recognised as an institution that was both 'gendered' and gender-defining (Cohn 1993; 2013; Mathers, 2013:126-128) the masculine culture of the military institution was rarely referred to by male participants to the study; this aspect of military life sufficiently assumed by both participants and the researcher as to need no explicit reinforcement in interview. This lack of reflection on the gendered nature of military life accords with Seidler's (1997:9) observation that traditional masculinities were characterised by the 'suppression of the emotional life' and, as such, were un-reflexive about their gender status¹⁰⁰. Unsurprisingly gender was an explicit and central theme in the account of the only female participant to the study.

Kate was one of the few women in the British Army to have formally engaged in a combat role during this period. Her experience of both service and transition (see Chapter 5) was similar to that of contemporary female service personnel who have, more recently integrated into combat units that retain a hegemonic masculine character (Connell 1987). Kate's description of winning acceptance from male colleagues and co-constituting a sense of 'belonging' to units with which she served is perhaps more positive than the experience of 'equivalence' observed by Brownstone (2014) in her study of female US Marines. Despite this, Kate's experience in Special Forces exemplifies the 'boundary heightening' and 'role encapsulation' theorised by Kanter as the manner in which 'token' representatives of gender minorities were forced to manage their status within hegemonic organisations (Kanter in Carreiras, 2006:36). Kate described the requirement to 'justify' her adoption of an unconventional gender role (Amancio in Carreiras,

¹⁰⁰ This in itself demonstrates the gendered nature of military service (see Amancio in Carreiras 2006:27).

2006:28) achieving assimilation into the unit only through demonstrable 'over-performance' on core combat skills such as shooting, driving and physical fitness. In this, she differed from Brownstone's marines who placed greater emphasis on equivalence being achieved only through the demonstration of competence in other 'specialist' areas to balance physical deficiency.

Kate proposed that, under most circumstances, even in a Special Forces unit, differences in physicality were more contrived than real. In this she demonstrated a point highlighted by Marcia Kovitz (2003) in her 1998 study of the Canadian military:

'an organisational structure and meaning system that together incorporate a number of mutually informing and binary oppositions such as war/peace, death/life, strong/weak, military/civilian, defenders/defended, friend/enemy and uniformity/diversity. It is onto these sets of oppositions that gender is mapped: men/masculinity is associated with the former (i.e. war, strong, military, uniformity, defenders, friend etc.) and women/femininity with the latter (i.e. peace, weak, civilian, diversity, defended, enemy etc.), embodying in part, impediments to operational effectiveness.' (Kovitz, 2003:6)

Kovitz proposed that the rejection and problematisation of females in the military was related less to 'what females are, than what they represent' (Kovitz 2003:6). Kate's narratives demonstrated that the female body was not 'incompatible' with the demanding environment of the Special Forces unit, but in some units, particularly where their own elite masculine status may be challenged, this compatibility may itself have provided the basis for rejection.

It is significant that Kate described the greatest problems with the integration of women as existing in units that formed a 'second string' of Special Forces activity, where many of the unit members had opted for service in this unit because they had failed selection to 'top tier' Special Forces units like the SAS (Ford 1997:187 and 190). In these accounts we can see how Kovitz's representations of masculine and feminine identity play out in practice. Kate's presence in the unit was resented to a greater degree where members felt more challenged by the construction of their work (surveillance) as compatible with feminine characteristics. Individuals within this unit were rejecting of female operators irrespective of their ability to

bring capabilities to their undercover work that could not be achieved by male operators. By linking masculine professional insecurity with this seemingly illogical approach to the benefit that gender diversity brought the unit, we can observe the centrality of masculinity to elite military identity. The belligerence that Kate experienced being symptomatic of the 'boundary heightening' prevalent in organisations where the dominant masculine gender identity required constant reinforcement.

This interpretation was significant. Recent developments in the study of military masculinities emphasise that, as there are a plurality of unit cultures, so there is a plurality of types of masculinity experienced in the military (Higate, 2003:29) of which the masculinity of the 'combat soldier' sits at the 'apex' (Woodward and Winter, 2007:63). Kate's experience is testimony to the fact that even within this 'apex' there were different forms of masculinity that gave rise to different performative expressions (Woodward and Winter, 2007:72-74), the masculinity of the SAS soldiers with whom Kate worked appeared less structurally transgressive than that which she experienced in the surveillance unit. By linking this to the 'second tier status' and professional un-fulfilment of some Special Forces surveillance operators, Kate demonstrated the inter-relation of sub-unit habitus, relative field capital and compensatory hyper-masculine excess. Thus forms of transgression identified in critiques of private military security could be argued to form a structured element of state military service, particularly in elite combat units.

Discussion: Military Culture as Capital

Most participants expressed a direct continuity between military service and their work in private security. At the heart of this connection were the competencies and behaviours created by military service, dispositions that came to form the 'habitus' of the military person. The logic of this exposition was that, in the creation of this habitus, the military person generated a form of embodied capital that facilitated the participants' transition to, and movement within, the 'field' of private military security.

When discussing military service the central and coalescing theme was that of the creation of subjective modes of thought and behaviour that allowed the military person to be successful in the commission of violent conflict enacted to achieve specific aims determined by an external other. This required the development of competence in a number of practices, from the manual pre-reflexive skills of handling weapons through to the physical and psychological conditioning necessary to overcome natural inhibitions (fear, discomfort, pain etc.). These practices involved more than just physical fitness and a preparedness to work in dangerous circumstances; but, ostensibly, incorporated the seemingly divergent qualities of being able to be both rational and aggressive simultaneously in the face of opposing hostility (Hockey, 2003 and Holmgren, 2013). The dispositions created by this conditioning aligned more closely to 'warrior' (rather than peacekeeper) modalities, and formed the foundation of the military habitus, a bedrock of behaviour that defined what it was to be military and that had to be mastered before other more sophisticated military skills and knowledge could be acquired.

This foundational habitus created the expectation that the military person would be able to behave reliably and prevail in circumstances of violent confrontation. This expectation, more concrete when it had been tested in conflict, became a means by which value and status was ascribed within the military environment and formed the basis of many social transactions. Indeed, the role of economic capital, so dominant in civilian fields suffered diminution within in the military context. As such, it was the aggregate of embodied physical and neurological practices that prepared soldiers to be successful in conflict with an enemy, a type of 'militarised somatic memory' (Highgate, 2012e in McSorley, 2013:18) best conceived of as 'fighting capital', that served to place the soldier in the military field and facilitate their movement and possibilities within in that field. The level of 'fighting capital' possessed by the soldier was determined by the formation of the habitus; a well-formed military habitus, with service in front-line or elite units and experience of operational soldiering, would confer greater status and capital.

The participants' emphasis on the physically embodying practices of military identity formation was indicative of the somatic nature of military knowledge

(Hockey, 1986; Morgan, 1994) and the 'embodying institutionalization' of military culture (Higate, 2005:305). Contained within this construction was meaning that extended beyond simple physical/mental capability. Military identity was intrinsic and pre-reflexive, informing every action and response when confronted with crisis. When an incident occurred 'the training just kicks in' (Nigel) and technique was applied in the interests of power (in this case the state) without either need or recourse to cognition. As such, the somatic conditioning of military practice served to reinforce the 'morally boundaried' nature of military culture. Out of necessity the military actor was trained to be able to take action before individual moral cognition could be exercised. In combat units this was reflected in a culture of 'radical professionalism' that established the abrogation of individual moral agency, and subordination of this function to either higher authority or practical expedience. This became a tenet of professional identity.

The importance of embodiment in the creation of social habitus has been recognised by scholars (Wacquant, 1995, Cambell, 1996, Shilling, 1997), as has its importance in military training (Highgate, 2003, Hockey, 2002; 2009; Lande 2007). Lande, making the link between embodiment and the interaction of habitus and capital within the military 'field' observed that: 'Changes in form to what phenomenologists call the 'corporeal schema' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002) entail the addition of new dispositions and kinetic and sensory powers that alter the very foundations of social interaction and conduct'. Lande proposed that that: 'Embodiment is thus a crucial but missing theme from traditional sociological accounts of military life' (Lande, 2007: 97). Where embodiment has been explored it has been closely linked to gendered cultures and identity (Arkin and Dobrofski, 1978). Indeed Paul Higate has argued that embodied masculinity resides at the core of all military identities. Under any analysis it is clear that the physically and ritualistically (Burk, 2004 and Winslow, 1999, Thornborrow and Brown's 2009) reinforced, hyper-masculine, communitarian and professionally radical culture of the combat unit creates in the soldier a combative identity of considerable strength and durability.

In a military sense the logic behind the creation of this highly durable identity was clear; to overcome the challenges of persuading (largely, though not exclusively,)

men, to engage in violent and dangerous activity which, left to their own devices they would be unwilling to carry out¹⁰¹, and to ensure their competence in the enactment of this activity when required. This demonstrated the way in which the 'ritualisation of emotions' in the military environment worked to alter and minimise the effect of 'entropic' natural emotions such as 'fear, timidity, anxiousness, disgust and boredom' (Jelušić, 2005:238) on the ability of military units to maintain cohesion and effectiveness in war:

'The military while managing emotions, tries to redefine the situation of emotions, change the expressive gestures, impose regulative norms and, sometimes, create consistent action. These attempts might be so powerful that the individual soldier reinterprets the emotion and no longer reflects on himself/herself or his or her subjective feelings, but, rather, reflects on collective and institutionalised emotions internalized through trained emotional work' (Jelušić, 2005:239)

In the creation of this 'reliable identity' military service fundamentally altered the emotional condition, providing incentives to emotional fulfilment through exposure to stimuli that the civilian would consider harmful or entropic (danger, physical adversity, conflict etc.). As such, the identity of the military 'warrior' was, one in which danger and insecurity was actively sought so that could be challenged or dominated.

Special Forces and the Capital of Exception

The themes of physicality, embodied knowledge, mortality and danger were common between the former regular military participants in the study. It was clear that these experiences created somatic capabilities and behavioural dispositions that determined their access to the field of private military security and the decisions they made as private sector actors (see Chapters 6-8). However, service in Special Forces was seen to have a distinct quality that distilled and intensified these categories of meaning and the masculinities that underpinned

¹⁰¹ Marcia Kovitz (2003:5-6) highlighted the frailty of the normative assumption of the genetic masculine pre-disposition to enthusiasm or efficacy in the conduct of organised violence. In *On Killing* David Grossman (1996) provided a remarkable insight into the difficulty that most military people experience with the conduct of violence. Randall Collins, in his *microsociology of Violence* (Collins, 2008) demonstrated that, even with considerable training and conditioning, most people remain profoundly uncomfortable with violence and (with the exception of a small minority of the population) generally inept in its commission.

them. The habitus of the Special Forces soldier was a highly refined version of that of the conventional military actor. Commensurately the perceived value of the Special Forces soldier's 'fighting capital' was greater than that of their 'green army' peers¹⁰². Yet, despite these similarities Special Forces service was seen to impart a meaning and experience that had a different character to that of conventional military service. The levels of physicality required by Special Forces transcended the purely corporeal and were seen to become a function of mental toughness that was expressed in language verging on the spiritual. But more than this, Special Forces service was seen to impart a quality of exceptional individual autonomy and innovation. This both required and inculcated greater grounded strategic awareness in the Special Forces 'operator' than would be required of the conventional military soldier. In turn, this demanded of the Special Forces actor a greater maturity and rationality than their 'green army' counterpart. Despite this, it was clear that, in some cases, this latitude also created circumstances in which transgressive behaviour had been free to flourish.

To understand the significance of this, we have to understand the nature of the Special Forces role and organisation. 'Special' status in military terms denotes units whose mode of operations involves actions that fall beyond the scope of traditional conventional warfare. Indeed the specific function of many Special Forces and specialist intelligence units is, specifically, the conduct of 'unconventional warfare'. The denomination 'special' therefore expresses a 'hybrid' status, one in which the service person is engaged in activity that is both 'hyper-military' and 'beyond military'. These types of military operation are characterised by the manner in which the traditional boundaries between the military, the constabulary, the state and the private, the legitimate and the criminal are broken down (Kaldor, 2003). As such the social capital (i.e. the operators network of professional contacts) extends well beyond that which may be experienced in conventional military service. Further, conduct of 'special operations' on behalf of the state implies the acquisition of skills and techniques that fall beyond the normal sphere of conventional military action. These skills

¹⁰² See King (2016) on specialist close quarter combat techniques until recently the preserve of Special Forces.

exist in the nexus between criminal activity and warfare. As one former SAS participant observed:

‘One man’s terrorist is another man’s Special Operations Executive, what is SOE if not a terrorist organisation? I mean their brief from Churchill was to set Europe ablaze. If that is not terrorism I don’t know what is.’

(Craig)

The development of these unconventional military roles created a type of soldiering that required individual motivation and self-discipline rather than the more traditional collective discipline of the conventional military. This was seen to have inculcated very different standards of objective control within these units. In Kate’s description of Special Forces surveillance, the unit culture differed radically that of the conventional military. The unconventional nature of the covert surveillance role meant the unit adopted practices, such as non-standard dress (Parks, 2003) and an informality in relations between soldiers and officers, (including the implied acceptance of sexual relations between officers and soldiers serving within the same unit), that would have been considered unacceptable in the ‘green army’. Some of these behaviours, such as the sexual harassment and sexual violence described by Kate, would have resulted in arrest and courts marshal in a conventional military unit. Despite this, none of these incidents led to the unit, or individuals being the subject of censure, isolation or stigma. The exceptional nature of the unit’s role and status sustained this transgression as an acceptable divergence from conventional military norms.

This impunity was reproduced within the broader military field where members of special designation units held a formally recognised differentiated status, becoming, in the words of one participant ‘an army within an army’. Special Forces training transcended the constraints of conventional military training; its circumstances both more testing and more hazardous (Chisholm, 2008). The nomenclature of Special Forces roles and status had a different quality; the elite ‘non-green’ soldier often referred to as an ‘operator’ rather than a ‘private’. Additional increments of pay¹⁰³ served to distinguish between conventional army

¹⁰³ Special Forces pay and special duties pay are upgrades to the soldiers remuneration received when they have qualified as, and are serving with ‘non-green army’ military units.

rank structure and the exceptional status of the elite Special Forces or special intelligence operator. Further, within the military imagination Special Forces were held to a different standard in relation to the force they exercised (Asher, 2002; Nichol, 2017; Fence, 2020). Additionally, special designation units received the best funding; the most up-to date equipment and access to secret intelligence that would often be withheld from conventional army units.

Civilian and non-Special Forces interviewees perceived the Special Forces habitus to display qualities of both impunity and privilege. Despite this, the elite 'non-green army' soldier was neither isolated nor stigmatised. Instead they were celebrated as the ultimate exemplars of military value (Chisholm, 2008). In one participant's words they were 'military rock stars, they're the people who everyone wants to be' (Andrew). As such, in keeping with their designation, 'special' units displayed an independence from the norms and constraints of the traditional military institution while still remaining a part of that system. In this respect the Special Forces or special intelligence 'operator' embodied the 'ecstasy belonging' that Agamben described as the 'topological structure' of the state of exception; the condition of at once 'being-outside and yet belonging' (Agamben, 2005:35) that formed the ultimate expression of sovereignty.

Thus 'non-green army' service implied a culture and disposition that extended beyond the radical professional, or 'morally boundaried', construction of the conventional military. The exceptional actor accepted that theirs was a role that engaged in legitimised transgression both more routinely and of a nature qualitatively more extreme than that which would be acceptable in the conventional military. Further, the 'non-green' identity incorporated an increased emphasis on the agency of the individual soldier to determine when the transgression of normative (i.e. conventional) military standards was warranted. This allowed Special Forces units and sub-units to rationalise their own divergent practice and conferred upon their soldiers the quality of the sovereign actor. In so doing the Special Forces habitus created a form of military capital that transcended the 'fighting capital' of the foundational military habitus. The Special Forces soldier was seen to possess symbolic capital associated not only with superior military somatic knowledge, but embodying state-like sovereign

exceptionalism, a quality which had its own value when transposed into the commercial sphere; the mobilisation of this capital becoming a central means through which the export military methods and techniques into (formerly) civilian fields could be legitimised (see Chapter 8).

In this Chapter I began by proposing that only some military people chose to transition into military private security, but that military experience was seminal to this transition. Overwhelmingly, the experience my interviewees considered relevant to their transition to military private security was linked to service in combat units. These units were dominated by 'warrior' modalities that were divergent, rather than convergent with the values of civil society, but that, through the highly encompassing somatic conditioning and cultural reinforcement of military training, provided a form of guarantee that the soldier would act reliably in the interests of the collective under circumstances of existential threat; a 'fighting capital' that could be commoditised in the commercial security field. However, in creating this capital the military altered the emotional condition of the soldier, creating a disposition in which exposure to adversity and danger became a source of emotional fulfilment, and which could be seen to incentivise the individual to seek circumstances of insecurity over which dominance could be imposed through violent action. In this, the military habitus placed higher order moral considerations beyond the bounds of cognition and created practical ethics as a function of unit or sub-unit culture. These cultures existed in tension with overall institutional (and societal) values. The greater the elite status of the sub-unit, the greater the permitted divergence from societal norms, with Special Forces representing an apex of radical professionalism, masculine individualism and state-like exceptionalism. As we will see in the next chapter, it was the desire to re-capture, or maintain, these circumstances of service that most directly determined participation in private military security.

Chapter 5 Transitions

Having examined the elements of their military past that my interviewees considered seminal to their transition into private military security, I now turn to the transitioning experience itself. How and why did certain military people, and ex-military people choose to work in private military security and what was their experience of transition into the field?

Military to Civilian Transition

The concept of military to civilian transition (MCT), the process of moving from military to civilian employment, has emerged in the United States (Castro, Kintzle, & Hassan, 2014) and Israel (Vigoda, Baruch and Grimland, 2010) as a field of both practice and scholarship in recent years. British military involvement in the Iraq and Afghan conflicts has meant that the transitioning experience has become a focus of political attention in the United Kingdom (Cooper et al., 2016). The process of a serviceperson's transition from regular (i.e. full-time) military service to non-military employment is referred to in the British Armed Forces as 'resettlement'. This process has been defined by the Forces in Mind Trust, a leading charity supporting research in the military service sector, as 'a period of reintegration into civilian life from the military and encapsulates the process of change that a service person necessarily undertakes when her or his military career comes to an end' (Forces in Mind Trust, 2013 in Cooper et al., 2016). Resettlement sought to provide the service-leaver with a period of briefing and training prior to discharge from the military, equip them with knowledge of the opportunities available in the civilian marketplace, and provide them with civilian qualifications that would assist in transition. The details of this process were set out in the Tri-Service Resettlement and Employment Support Manual produced by the Ministry of Defence (MoD, 2015).

In her 1994 study of the transition of 62 British armed forces personnel to civilian life Ruth Jolly (1996b) proposed that former service people were divided into two groups: those who re-constructed a new civilian self-identity independent of their military past, and succeed in transition; and those who, even after their transition to the civilian world, continued to see themselves as military. Jolly asked the

question of why so many military people retained a sense-of-self that never transcended the construct formed during military service and, in Jolly's words 'remained captured by their military past' (Jolly 1996b cited in Higate, 2001:446). Jolly provided a useful template for understanding the phases of transition experienced by the service person: The first of these, 'confrontation', was the period in which the service leaver confronted the differences between the military and civilian realms and accepted (or otherwise) the requirement for change. 'Disengagement' was the phase in which the former serviceperson began to examine their loyalty and affiliation to the military institution and question the decisions and priorities they cultivated while they were serving. 'Resocialisation' was the process of acquiring a civilian 'self' that superseded their former military identity and ultimately concluded the process of acculturation to civilian life.

Paul Higate, in his examination of the transition of former members of the armed forces to homelessness and rough-sleeping provided a counterpoint to Jolly's interpretation. He emphasised that the experience in service of military personnel varied significantly depending on their role; an RAF Clerk, for example, having a very different experience of service to that of a soldier in the Parachute Regiment (Higate, 2001:445; 2003). While agreeing with Jolly that an analysis of the subjective experience of transition was essential, Higate considered Jolly's position too reductive. He proposed that a purely subjective approach failed to take into account the manner in which the ex-serviceperson was viewed by society and the affect this had on their opportunities for post military employment. Based on then contemporary developments in social theory, Higate proposed that through the identification of the 'universal features of military experience' (Higate 2001:444) the nature of the military civilian transition for a broad spectrum of former military actors could be better understood.

In seeking the 'universal features' of military service Higate (2001) first examined the concept of military 'institutionalization'. While observing that the military functioned as a 'total institution' (Goffman 1961) he found that the concept of 'institutionalization' was little more than shorthand for a perceived lack of adaptability by service personnel transitioning into civilian roles. Highgate found that many service leavers, faced with challenges of transition, fell back on the

embodied skills of fieldcraft and survival that they had learned in the military. These skills were based less in the institutional modalities of military life than the embodied masculine identity that remained a continuous characteristic across all roles and services of the armed forces. Higate considered that the deployment of these somatic capacities explained the high prevalence of transition between the military and 'masculinised organisations', such as the police, prison service and private security observed by Jolly (Jolly, 1996a:102), but could also account for the prevalence of former service people that least 'institutional' of social groups, the homeless street population.

In an insightful (albeit limited, *n14*), qualitative study of British veterans Jens Zinn (2011) examined the manner in which former service people managed the risk and uncertainty of discharge from the military. Zinn's work focused on motivations for leaving the Armed Forces and highlighted tensions that lay at the heart of many service peoples' decision to resign from service. Zinn proposed that the 'distance' between the individual and the military in terms of both occupational and moral behaviors was key. Under this approach it was possible for the service person to believe in military institutional values, but feel tension with an organisation that, in their perception, had failed to live up to these values, whether in terms of everyday occupational conduct, or in respect of its commitment to professed moral standards. Zinn's work supported the notion that a waning of 'organizational commitment'¹⁰⁴ was at the heart of transitioning decisions. He observed that, in transitioning to civilian life, the 'proximity or distance' with, or from, military culture could be adopted as a paradigm through which the individual's approach to military-civilian transition (and ultimately their success or failure in this endeavor) could be understood. Implicit to Zinn's analysis was the belief that those service people who, during their service, resisted or avoided complete immersion in institutional values tended to fair better in military civilian transition.

More recent studies on career transitions in general can also assist in understanding military civilian transition. In his work on civilians transitioning

¹⁰⁴ As defined by Meyer and Allen (1997) and developed by Vigoda-Gadot, Baruch and Grimland, (2010) in their study of Israeli Defense Force personnel in transition.

into radically different careers Potter (2015) provided the concept of 'transitional spaces' and 'self-actualisation'. The former encapsulated the notion of the liminal space in which the individual in transition sat between two formed identities, that of the thing they were and that of what they wished to become. It was in this space that identity could be re-moulded and the challenges of Jolly's 'confrontation' addressed. Potter's concept of 'self-actualisation' is analogous to the charge of emotional energy used by Durkheim, Goffman and Collins to describe the powerfully experienced, non-material fulfilment that motivates social interaction at all levels (Collins, 2004:102-140). Potter provides evidence of the extent to which radical career transitions were based on notions of self-actualisation; that in modern society we are defined by our work and that, for many people to change career is to change oneself. Thus, transition often occurred in the context of an individual desire to realise personal potential and achieve a subjective sense of fulfilment. The narratives of participants in my study reflected many of these themes and rationales.

Participants described a number of different trajectories in their transition from military services to private security. For some the transition was direct, with no interposing period of alternative civilian employment, a trajectory I term 'continuous transition'. For others engagement in private military security came after periods work in entirely non-military industries (i.e. 'discontinuous transition'). Each of these trajectories encompassed differing motivations and reasons for transition; but also shared some underpinning rationales.

Continuous Transition: Incidental Continuity

Victor was in his 60s, a former senior NCO in the SAS. He left the Army in the 1990s having completed 22 years of service. He would have been eligible to continue his service in Special Forces but instead chose discharge from the military. While not intending to move into private military security, Victor found himself transitioning seamlessly into 'the Circuit' even before his full discharge from the military was complete:

'I had a run in with the Colonel and instead of going from SQS¹⁰⁵ to Sergeant Major I was side-lined. So I spent the last two years with the TA and my idea when I was coming up to leave the Army, in my last 18 months or so, was that the last thing I would do would be go into the security industry. I'd set my sights on a pre-release course in Health and Safety and I was absolutely determined to leave the Army and get some sort of job in Health and Safety. Well, I was in that last three months, I'd already done my pre-release course when a chap rang me up and said "look I've got this short job, it's only about 10 days probably, security role down in London, nice, easy, just security on a hotel, well not the hotel itself, the back part which is a private apartment block for the incredibly wealthy". I said OK. I just did night shifts for 10 days and got a decent salary for it. And then once that had finished within the space of about 2 or 3 weeks the same chap rang me up and said, "look there's another coming up but this one's going to be 2 and a half to 3 months". So I went on that job, that was more close protection, working through the day escorting people from where we were, quite near Sunningdale Golf Course, into London, around London, very, very simple, low key, and the money was OK. And then another job came up, and then after that another. And I suppose after 2 or 3 years, unintentionally I'd actually fallen into the trap of doing the one thing that I'd intended not to do. I mean, to be honest, I think what I should have done, maybe after 2 or 3 years, is said "right that is it! I'm going to get back on track with Health and Safety". But I didn't because these roles kept coming up and some of them were really interesting.' (Victor)

Victor's original intention was that, with the end of his career, he would make a clean break from the military and transition into a different sphere of civilian work. In this he demonstrated his willingness to make a change to civilian employment (Jolly, 1996a:10). The military had provided him with some time for re-training and preparation for his discharge. However, as his discharge approached, opportunities arose in private security that made the effort and insecurity of the transition to truly civilian employment unnecessary. This pattern was common among an older generation of senior NCOs from the Special Forces community. The move to private security expressed in terms of continuity rather than transition as labour market access to the private military security 'Circuit' was facilitated by the social capital (Bourdieu, 1984;1986) of Special Forces service. Many of the commercial tasks performed at this time were similar in

¹⁰⁵ Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant

nature to military tasks and involved working directly with former military peers. In the 1990s, prior to the establishment of the Private Security Industries Act 2001 and the Montreux process, qualified former Special Forces soldiers were not required to re-train in order to work in the civilian environment. As such, passage from the military to the private security field involved no meaningful transition through a liminal/transitional space (Potter, 2015) where values and dispositions were confronted (Jolly, 1996b:10).

In expressing his reasons for leaving military service, we see in Victor's narrative a recurring theme, that of disillusion with the organisational culture (Martin, 2002 in Potter 2015:104) of the military and frustration that the forward momentum of his career (in this case the promotion to Sergeant Major) was thwarted by poor relations with an individual senior officer. Thus Victor's decision to leave the military was conditioned by a subjective association between success and continued progress through formal ranks of socio-economic status akin to Hirschman's 'ideology of exit' (1970:112). In this, Victor's values were less closely oriented to 'institutional' modalities than to the more modern individual expectation that both life and career should have 'forward trajectory', a concept that is a relatively contemporary 'western' construction aligned closely to the idea that the function of work is to provide 'self-actualising' emotional fulfilment (Berger et al., 1977 in Potter, 2015:74).

The theme of 'self-actualisation' was also evident in Victor's reasons for continuing to carry out private security work. While money was a factor in his decision to continue working in the sector, it was neither the single nor the driving impetus. Instead Victor's decision was based on more experiential factors. In his words the work he was conducting in private security was 'really interesting'. Thus, subject to a basic level of financial security, Victor's decision to continue military style work in the private security sector was influenced by the desire to continue experiencing the sense of meaning and relevance associated with this type of work, albeit without the constraints of a military occupational culture with which he had become both frustrated and disillusioned.

Despite this, Victor expressed no resentment in respect of his military career; his service in the SAS included personal involvement in some of the most defining actions of that unit. The tension that resulted in his decision to leave the Army was the same that propelled him into Special Forces in the first instance; that of distance between his own values of resourcefulness and individualism and the rigidity of the military institution. In this, Victor displayed a consistent 'distance' from military culture that, despite the absence of any distinct period of transition, allowed him to adapt to the world of the commercial provision of military style services with relative ease. However, this transition took place with little need or opportunity to engage in the self-reflective confrontation, disengagement and resocialisation described by Jolly. Thus for Victor, transition to 'the Circuit' was to continue to be military by other means, without the impediment of rigid institutional constraints. Victor left the private military security industry in the late 2000s and re-trained in Health and Safety. His experience of commercial security providing him with what he latterly saw as an extended transition into genuinely civilian employment.

Discontinuous Transition: Re-Engagement

The theme of individual progress and emotional fulfilment was similar for Ian, a former senior NCO in the SAS Regiment. Ian's intention, like Victor's, was to move into civilian work after leaving the military. Initially Ian chose to take a security job in London to support himself while he undertook training in business administration. He rejected drifting directly into the more militarised field of 'the Circuit' and sought to provide himself with the 'transitional space' necessary for resocialisation to civilian life. Over time Ian became employed in managing a large portfolio of facilities and property management, a wholly civilian role. However, feeling unchallenged by the work he was asked to conduct, and observing the opportunities that the 2003 Invasion of Iraq presented to an ex-Special Forces soldier with a knowledge of Arabic, he re-engaged with military style work in the private sector:

'I Left [the Army] rather than extending my career. I wanted to do an MBA (Masters of Business Administration). The first job offer I had was to work for [a company in the extractive industry] as I spoke [two languages].

However after a lengthy interview process, and passing all of that, getting ready to go out to [a country in Africa], I was asked to do a security survey for [a major City of London financial institution]. Having done a survey, the business asked me to become their security manager and, eventually, Head of Security. I was married at the time, so rather than go to [Africa] I accepted the job in UK. I would be better paid and I would be in the City. So I moved from Hereford and into the City of London and worked there. It was quite a difficult transition to go from the military, where you talk in acronyms and a different type of 'speak', to a civilian environment. I ended up doing a whole series of things that weren't security, running facilities, running this big restaurant, business continuity - which for a financial institution is all IT based, a property portfolio worth 14 million. But every two years I got 'itchy feet'. I was paid really well, but I decided to leave, sitting there with your life going by and your brain becoming stale, that for me wasn't living. There were people who I had promoted who were capable of doing my job. So I asked to be made redundant. I left and set up a company to track and recover stolen goods. I set this up with a friend of mine, a head of Special Branch, using GPS technology to track goods in transit. This didn't work out. I needed a change and I decided to use my Arabic, which I had learned in the Army. I took a job with a [western] Oil company, liaising with the Iraqi Army. I came back from Iraq and I worked for [a major news agency] in Pakistan and then worked in the Middle East doing security for NGOs and oil companies. (Ian)

Ian talked of completing his MBA as providing him with the 'language' to be able to communicate effectively in the civilian business world. The experience of undertaking security in the City of London, and the exposure this provided to the environment of business, created for him a 'transitional space' to confront his military identity and resocialise to a civilian environment. His ability to adapt to the environment of work in the city earned him promotion, involving a move away from security and into more mainstream business. However, despite an ostensibly successful transition to the civilian workplace (where he received high pay and career progression) civilian work did not provide the emotional fulfilment of the military; despite his ability to adapt, Ian had not fully disengaged from his military past.

This pattern of re-engagement was not uncommon among older servicemen. David describes how, following a successful career in the City of London he chose to re-enter the private military security field with the expansion of opportunities

in the maritime security sector:

'I'm a former Royal Marine from some time back. I joined the Marines in 1982, left in 1992. Until 2010, I had a career in the City [doing] business development in various industries, ranging from production to investment banking. So when this industry kicked off, the maritime industry, I had periodically got myself qualified, if you like, I got the basis, the entry level qualifications that at the time were required for this role.

So I'd got myself prepared for this industry, as I was at a point where I'd started to... I suppose for want of a better word, I had my male menopause. There was lots of guys I'd served with who'd gone into land based work for companies like Aegis, Olive, Edinburgh Risk... that wasn't really something I wanted to get into. Although I have lots of contacts within that [field] and job opportunities were there, but it wasn't something that I felt an urge to do.

As the Maritime industry started to gather and pick up pace, and companies were forming which seemed to have a reasonable pipeline of business, obviously you're getting phone calls from your old network of colleagues, people you've served with, saying there's opportunities. I started to look into it a lot more seriously. From my point of view, financially, it wasn't so much a financial gain because the financial gains [in maritime security] had been quite good initially. However being an older guy coming into it, I'd had a fairly good civilian career so I wasn't financially motivated. Mine was probably more from... I don't know really, capturing a bit of the old youth and I suppose job satisfaction. It got to a point where I was getting a bit stale and bored in what I was doing. So that was one of the real motives for me.' (David)

For both Ian and David, the growth of the private military security field meant that they were able to use specific skills and capital provided to them by their military service. For Ian, service in an elite military Special Forces organisation and knowledge of Arabic was central to his re-engagement with security related activity in the international sphere. For David, service with an elite unit (in this case the Royal Marines) was also pivotal, as this implied both experience and capability in armed conflict (fighting capital) as well as the specialist knowledge of maritime practice. These forms of capital were directly transferable to emerging sub-fields of commercial security. In both cases the choice to transition was not motivated by financial gain. Instead emotional fulfilment, or 'self-

actualisation', was central to their decision to re-engage with military style work in the private sector.

We can see in Ian and David's path into military private security the broader trends in the industry described in Chapter 1. Ian's relatively high levels of capital associated with his Special Forces background provided him with immediate access to a market that was, at the time, still emerging from the informality of 'the Circuit'. David's capital was less well developed and would probably not have provided him with access to the relatively closed labour market of the Circuit era. However, as the private security industry grew with the advent of the Global War on Terror, new opportunities for conventional military service people began to emerge. In David's case his service as a Marine gave him the physical capabilities, skills and knowledge (the somatic capital) directly relevant for the newly emerging maritime boom. By this time growing systems of governance within the military private security field (and in maritime security in particular) meant that on joining the maritime security industry David was required to undertake a 'transitional' period, re-training and gaining qualifications as a pre-requisite for employment. Despite the relatively short-lived maritime security 'boom' David was successful in his career transition. His experience in the City stood him in good stead and as he was able to move from the position of a freelance security team leader into a role in corporate management. From here he became engaged in commercial business development activity for a range of ground and maritime-based security.

Continuous Transition: Aspirant Continuity:

For a younger generation of service person with conventional military experience the Global War on Terror and Invasion of Iraq in 2003 meant that, for the first time, the option of transferring directly from the military into private military security was a possibility. Terry, a former soldier in the Parachute Regiment, transitioned into private security following a short military career that was characterised by significant engagement in high-intensity counter-insurgency and war-fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Terry's transition from the military into private security was precipitated by the restriction of his ability to be actively engaged in front-line soldiering. The cause of this restriction was injury; hearing

loss sustained as a result of his protracted exposure to gunfire and explosives during combat operations in Sangin. Terry talked about managing the consequences of his disability, his decision to leave the military and his feelings on transitioning to employment in military private security in Iraq:

'I mean it was basically out of my hands. I went to do a course, to become [an Army] physical training instructor... and back years ago, some of the PTI's¹⁰⁶ were deaf as doornails, so it was a safe haven if anything was to happen to you. But on the course things changed, health and safety came in, and basically I was pulled off that course because of my hearing loss. It would have been unsafe to perform the duty on roads in case I didn't hear the traffic. I decided then, I thought that's that, and it really upset me a lot, I mean I thought my career's ended. I didn't want to go down the only path I could of within the Battalion because I didn't see myself as, no disrespect to them on that side, stores and HQ and stuff like that... but I didn't join to... to be a storeman.

So I'd gone for different tests anyway and all the phonicals in my ear had been destroyed, so my hearing was worse when I came back and I got downgraded¹⁰⁷. I spoke to a Medical Officer, really nice fellow and he basically told me I could either stay in and [work as a storeman], or get out. The consideration of re-cap-badging¹⁰⁸ wasn't there, because he knew that that wouldn't happen... and I chose to get medical discharged because I couldn't go anywhere. I got discharged out the Army. I wasn't too happy, but there was nothing I could do.

I was on leave from getting medical discharge, I'd spent six month off. They basically medical discharged me on the day, but it took six month to write the papers up, and I went and worked on a building site, which I didn't mind, but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I was missing the 'family' I had. I was missing going on operations. I was hearing people in the Battalion; they were going here, there and everywhere. I had to think of a way of getting that back and the only way I knew was to do a close protection course and go and do private security. Because a lot of the people around the time I was getting out were all getting out to do the same thing... and it was my brothers, a lot of people that I knew and worked with within the military were now in the private sector. So I went

¹⁰⁶ PTI – Physical Training Instructor.

¹⁰⁷ Downgraded, medically downgraded is to be diagnosed by a military doctor with a condition that affects a soldier's ability to carry out their role.

¹⁰⁸ 'Re cap-badge' is to change regiments (literally to change the badge on one's headdress)

and did a close protection course through the Army, they paid for it, and really enjoyed it, and that's what I decided to do.

The owner of the course, he helped me out a lot. He's helped me out a lot ever since to be honest, every job I've got. He said, what were my feelings about going to the Middle East? And I said, that's what I'm looking to do. He put a word in and then two weeks later I get an interview. It was just before Christmas I had a week to deploy. I spoke to my partner and, basically, in this industry for your first job you can't really say no because, although it won't give you a bad reputation, if you then decide to [apply for work] with the same company they never forget and they blacklist you. So I decided to deploy.

I was really happy actually. I enjoyed it, I went out there, there was a few blokes from the same Battalion and from the same regiment, but different Battalions. There was a bloke there from the Falklands; he was still going strong, I shared a room with him... a lot of stories, a really good bloke. I still keep in contact with him now. I think he's still out there. Yeah, I enjoyed it. I did the training, really good training package, the vehicles, the kit that was on the vehicles was outstanding. I didn't really think it existed, but it did. I got settled in quite quick. My hearing didn't come into play there, they didn't really ask. Before I got the job I had to give them my discharge papers and, because I spoke to them on the phone, they said "you sound like you can hear me". But it's all about high tone hearing loss. I had to sign an agreement and my doctor had to class me as medically fit. That's me saying if anything happens then it's my own fault.'

In common with many other participants, Terry's decision to leave the military was the result of a tension created by the waning 'organizational commitment' (Zinn, 2011) between him and the military institution. This manifested as a form of 'value strain' (Zhang et al., 2011)¹⁰⁹; Terry's experience of the bureaucracy surrounding his injury creating disaffection as he tried to reconcile the demands of the institution with the elite sub-unit culture that anchored his sense-of-self. His career transition to private military security was defined by his desire not to accept or confront a change in his identity. Terry was a paratrooper and a combat soldier. This identity was sufficiently durably constructed to mean that neither

¹⁰⁹ Zhan et al. propose a theory of strain based Agnew's general strain theory (Agnew, 1992) in which strain is created by 'two conflicting social values or beliefs are competing in an individual's daily life' (Zhang, 2011)

the prospect of a more sedentary role within his battalion, nor medical discharge from the military was sufficient to make him confront, or disengage from this sense-of-self. Despite a limited transitioning period (the result of the bureaucracy of his discharge being completed) in which he experienced other civilian roles, he continued to seek the emotional fulfilment of service in active conflict environments. As with other participants, for Terry the imperative of self-actualisation transcended traditional 'institutional' loyalty. He was not tied to the institution of the Army. Instead he remained wedded to a more discrete identity, that of the elite airborne combat soldier; with the constructions of danger, sacrifice, action, kinship, and masculinity that this implied; an initiatory/communal identity (Thomas and Rosenzweig, 1982) formed at unit level that, following his discharge, he sustained in the private military sector.

By the time of Terry's discharge in 2010 the Army was offering security-training courses (in this case close protection) as part of the standard resettlement package for service leavers. The owner of the organisation conducting this training was key to Terry's ability to gain employment following the completion of his close protection course. This introduced him to a commercial field where the fighting capital created by his experience of combat operations had an exchange value. Despite this, Terry recognised that the offer of employment followed his training was facilitated by a 'gatekeeper' (the owner of the training course). This gatekeeper was a former member of Special Forces whose service background and entrepreneurial status provided forms of capital that Terry's conventional military service did not (i.e. the social and symbolic capital necessary to develop and maintain networks of state, corporate and private clients). Terry continued to work intermittently in the Middle East. However, by 2015 continuous close protection work had become difficult to obtain and he was reluctantly seeking permanent civilian employment in the UK.

Continuous Transition: Entrepreneurialism

The expansion of private military security provided the opportunity for Victor, Ian, David and Terry to engage as employees, or freelance consultants, in different parts of the private military security industry. For others the specialist knowledge that they had acquired in service could be could be exploited more

entrepreneurially. Stuart was a former infantry NCO who served with a UK Special Forces unit specialising in covert surveillance of suspected terrorists in Northern Ireland. Towards the end of his contracted service (22 years) he and a colleague founded a company providing military style covert surveillance to corporate, state and private client's in the United Kingdom and abroad:

'I think a lot depends on you yourself and your personality and your make up, when you come out of the military into civilian life. We were serving in a covert operations unit before we came out of the military and that really gives you a sort of mind set to how you see the world. It is a whole different world out there, the world we work in at the moment to the world that a lot of other people see. They hear more and more about it these days, because the threat has changed, not from terrorists, there's always terrorists out there, but it's changed from the more mainland, Northern Ireland terrorists to do with the UK, and it's now much more a Muslim and Islamic terrorist that the world is fighting.

So because of that, a lot more of the, shall we say, the dark side of the forces, the covert units, all the books that have come out, the films that they make nowadays, they're starting to put a lot more of the tradecraft¹¹⁰ in it. So a lot more secrets are coming out. I think peoples' perceptions now have changed; the world is more aware, and has woken up to what is happening in "our world" as we call it. They're not completely aware of what is happening, but they have a lot more of an idea now than they used to 10 years ago and... I wouldn't say the business is opening up, but the views of people are becoming wider. A lot more secrets are coming out.

There's many others who have come out [of the military] and have started their own business, and that could have been builders, plumbers and decorators, or who have come out and gone into the security industry. Some are at one end of the scale, where they have a company who provides manned-guarding¹¹¹, so you're talking quite a turnover, lots of employees, that type of thing. For us it was an idea that blossomed really. We thought about it while we were still serving. Once we came out we thought, "Right we need to make a living, this is what I'm good at, this is what I'm going to do". That's where [the business] was formed from.

At the same time, having worked in that world, coming out and doing it commercially, not sure where we were going to stand or how we were

¹¹⁰ Tradecraft is a term used to refer to the techniques, skills and procedures of covert action, espionage and counter terrorism.

¹¹¹ The provision of security guards for facilities and premises

going to go about this, who our clients were going to be, how much work is actually there, it's a very, I should say, it's not very, but sufficiently more lucrative market than say your average builder, painter, decorator, bus driver, etcetera. Business was a totally alien world and that was our biggest learning curve, not transferring the skills from military to civilian but learning about business. You soon come up against book work, VAT, employee contracts and stuff like that. It's a whole new world out there of which I'm still not fully one hundred per cent to grips with it. But if you can provide the core service then, you know, the rest of it is administration really. So it's that side of things, which we found difficult. It's not as straightforward as it looks and even now we're still learning things.

So you're combining really, with what you've done with your life so far and taken it into the civilian world and, having done that for the last 7 years, having run our own company it's got us a nice living. There's been times where we've had to tighten our belts a lot more and there's times where the sun has shone a bit more brightly. So, you know, it has its ups and downs.' (Stuart)

Stuart expressed his transition into the private security sector as having its roots in the increasing public knowledge of covert military techniques. During his military service secrecy was a defining feature of his work (Urban 1992:35). However, the nature of the work he conducted became more widely known with an expansion of information available to the public about covert military activity from the 1990s onwards. This trend had its roots in the proliferation of military memoirs in popular literature such as *The Operators* (Rennie, 1996), *Fishers of Men* (Lewis, 1999) and *Immediate Action* (McNabb, 1996) following the Good Friday agreement and the end of the conflict in Northern Ireland. These memoirs confirmed the existence of 14 Intelligence Company and other specialist covert units and brought their activity to the consciousness of the general public for the first time. Stuart believed that the proliferation of information in the public sphere about covert practices and techniques increased with the post 9-11 'Global War on Terror' and the shift in emphasis in the United Kingdom from 'domestic Irish' to 'international Islamic terrorism'. He believed that the greater accuracy of information available to the public regarding specific covert military techniques had created new demand for these skills and services among corporations, 'lower

tier' state organisations (such as local authorities and welfare departments) and private individuals.

The concept of Stuart's private surveillance business was created while he and his business partner were still in the military. The impetus for this was, in part, circumstances common to the longer-lived post-war generation of military service person - the necessity of finding gainful employment when the age of mandatory retirement from the Army was reached (Jelušić, 2003). Changes to the scope and scale of the private security industry, coupled with the proliferation of knowledge about covert techniques, created the somatic knowledge of covert surveillance as a type of capital that could be exchanged in the newly emerging private security field. Further, these changes legitimised the use of the exceptional practices of covert counter-terrorism by the commercial, private, and state entities that became Stuart's clients (see Chapter 8).

While Stuart underwent little by way of structured transition to the civilian workspace, he considered that his exposure to covert operations within the military eased his transition to the non-military world; the adoption of cover identities and cultivation of civilian dress and behaviour (Urban, 1992:35; Rennie, 1996; Lewis, 1999) having given him an insight into civilian culture and practice. The exposure to civilian and law enforcement agencies required by his Special Forces role, and the acquisition of specialist skills with an application beyond the military environment, all assisted in his move from the state to the commercial sector.

Stuart had successfully established himself in business within a few years of his discharge from the military. He was not a 'freelancer' dependent on his affiliation with the large security companies for his next contract. He was a partner in his own company, winning business and contracting other surveillance operators to work with him on the 'jobs' he identified and brokered. Nonetheless, he expressed the relative uncertainty of work as subcontractor, particularly by contrast to the stable employment status of a serving member of the military. In this respect his experience was similar to that of workers in an increasing number of trades and specialisms operating loose employment practices at the end of a contracting

chain (Thiel, 2012:12-15; Sennett 2008:34). As a subcontractor Stuart was required to effectively estimate the cost of the work that he was to undertake and market his skills to a network of prospective clients.

Stuart did not express an 'anomic' or 'culture shocked' transition between civilian and military employment (Higate, 2005:305) nor did he see his socialisation in the military as having significantly disadvantaged his transition to civilian life (Jolly, 1996a; 1996b; Randall and Brown, 1994). The experience of running a business meant that he had 'confronted' some areas of conflict between military life and that of work in the private sector; most significantly the relative lack of ontological security (Giddens, 1991) in business and the difficulty in understanding and adopting the practices of commerce. In Stuart's case this was balanced by the financial rewards of his entrepreneurial activity and the continued emotional fulfilment he derived from engagement in the 'secret world' of covert surveillance. In this, the continuity of identity between Stuart's military past and his commercial present was clear. Stuart was still something other than civilian; the practices of covert surveillance serving to underpin his identity as an elite actor engaged in specialist and 'exceptional' activity, whether this was conducted on behalf of the state or in the interests of commerce.

Discontinuous Transition: Transmigration

For much of the Cold War era the relationship between state service and employment in the private sector was both distinct and exclusive. An end to state employment often implied a cessation of status and access that was concrete and immutable. With the restructure (Rose and Miller, 2008), or withdrawal, (Harvey, 2005) of the state as an element of neoliberal economic thinking, opportunities for a form of hybrid state/commercial status began to emerge. The use of former government employees as commercial consultants began to increase. Within the military the use of reservists (Edmunds et al., 2016) in operational roles and the retention of commercial consultants by state security and military organisations emerged as an acceptable form of hybrid state engagement. Thus, by the 1990s, for certain types of former service person 'transmigration' (Lomsky-Feder et al., 2007) between the state and private sector became a sustainable form of post-military employment.

Kate's transition experience provided an early example of this. A former Army Officer, she spent the majority of her military career working with Special Forces as a surveillance operator. Her departure from the military brought into stark focus the institutional tensions that female service people were exposed to at the time of her service. As I have described, dissatisfaction with the rigidity of the military career structure (made more acute in Kate's case by the restrictions placed on women soldiers and officers) was a common thread running through participants' decision to leave the military. However, Kate's very considerable experience, and particular status as a female Special Forces operator, meant that soon after leaving the Army she began to undertake roles that involved state service and commercial business concurrently:

'For my final job in Special Forces they put me in as an assistant operations officer. Then they said, "you have been in the Army for too long as a Captain, so you've got to get promoted to Major and if you don't go to JDSC¹¹² then that's it really". I didn't want to go to JDSC. I had a real bee in my bonnet about staff work. Sitting behind a desk. It was a slight lack of confidence actually; I hadn't worked in the green army for years. SF is a particular 'brand' and I fitted well within the 'brand'. My last job [in the Army] was operational planning and I was really good at that, but it was training you to do a job that was sitting in an office, because effectively most people went on to do a staff job at the end of it. I would have probably had to do a staff job for a couple of years. I was really worried that I was never going to make the grade because a lot of friends of mine who had been in the green army, they knew stuff that I just didn't know, because you never got exposed to it SF. Now days SF fits within the green army much better, it's all part of the bigger picture. But when I was in, we ignored the rest of the green army. I mean nobody spoke to the green army unless you had to. We were this sort of elite 'pillar' that didn't have any other knowledge. So actually there was probably a bit of me that thought - god I'm going to struggle - I don't know what the fuck they're talking about.

The decision to leave was made for me. If I didn't complete another 6 years I wouldn't get my pension so I had to consider that. Then there was a guy called Toby Rushford¹¹³ who is now General Rushford. He came to see me and he sat in my office and I said "look what jobs are you going to give me if I stay in? I'm looking for 3 jobs". But the jobs they were offering me were jobs that I didn't want to do. One was sitting in the head office in main

¹¹² JDSC, Junior Division Staff College; the qualifying course for Captains wishing to become Majors.

¹¹³ Not his real name.

building, one was going to Chicksands¹¹⁴ as head of their interrogation wing; I don't like that sort of thing. He said "Well Kate to be honest you're probably going to go off and have a baby so it's not really worth talking about it too seriously anyway". He then mentioned the jobs that we talked about and then said "Well we might put you into those, but to be honest we might send you back to the [conventional unit]" from whence I had come. I said, "that's not really an option, I want three jobs in SF". Then he reiterated, "Well you'll probably have a baby" – and I said, "oh well I tell you what, don't you worry about whether I will have a baby or not, why don't you worry about my career", and he sort of... (pause and shrug). So at that point I thought, you know what, it's time to go, leave on a high I always say; leave while you are smiling and have good memories. So I left. I'd done 10 years of military experience and I left as a Captain. He's still a General in Special Forces.'

In Kate's description of her military service we can see the 'initiatory' (Thomas and Rosenzweig, 1982) nature of her affiliation to the Special Forces sub-unit. Despite her clear professional overachievement (Kanter, 1993 in Carreiras, 2006:36), her reluctance to fulfil the institutional requirements of an officer's career was central to her decision to leave the Army. In this case the inflexibility of the military institution was exacerbated by gender inequality. Kate wanted work that incorporated the values of Special Forces (despite the 'hyper-masculine' subculture through which these values were given expression); the requirement of the military institution that she diversify her experience and carry out roles that were more administratively focussed was at the heart of her decision to leave.

'When I came out, I looked at the Officer's Association. I had chats with all sorts of people. I did it properly. I went across the board looked at all sorts of commercial jobs. And I just can't... it just doesn't bother me about making money. I just don't care about a profit sheet. And I quickly realised that unless you care about it it's not fair. You wouldn't stay in the job very long if you don't make any money. I don't want to run my life around a profit and loss account. In the end I went to work for [a press agency] but I left after about 6 months. I was a project manager on an IT software implementation team. That was my first job. I looked really good because all I had to do was do an agenda and make sure people did what they said they were going to do. And they were like "ahh Kate this is amazing, how did you manage to do that, how did you get people to do that thing". And I was like, "are you serious? You just do an action plan and hold people to

¹¹⁴ Chicksands, The Defence Intelligence and Security Centre

account for it". Actually, I got the job through networking; somebody's brother ran the team. There must have been about 25 project managers. Nobody spoke to me for a bit and everybody was like, what does she know she's ex-military. Eventually they started speaking to you but it was quite painful to start with. [Despite this] I still had this thing about going to work in a 'proper job' so I guess the whole of my life I have avoided going to work in a 'proper job' I got it into my head that I wanted to be normal and live in a house like everybody else did' (Kate).

Kate tried actively to confront and disengage from her military past. She strove to conform to what she saw as normal civilian roles and practice. However, she realised that, while she no longer wanted the institutionalisation of a permanent role in state service, she was unfulfilled by work in the civilian field. This conundrum was solved when two opportunities appeared simultaneously. These allowed Kate to 'dip in and out' of the more emotionally fulfilling covert Special Forces activity that her departure from the military had interrupted.

"The [Government Agency] offered me a 6-month contract quite soon after I left; to carry on doing surveillance, carry on doing interesting stuff. So I jumped at that and what I needed was a job that fitted in with it. That's how I ended up freelancing for a rather long time – because it all fitted in rather well. [working for the state and working commercially] fitted my ideology of still trying to help out. I have this huge sense of always wanting to help people. And I went to NI originally because I said, "well, if I save one person by doing that job then it will all be worth it". And we saved probably a few more than that. And I think, probably when I left, because I only did 10 years and I still had a bit more in me, sometimes I think: oh my goodness I should have stayed in. It was the right decision to leave, but I still wanted to put something back. [working for the state and working commercially] fulfilled lots of things; still giving back something to the government, because I think we all feel a huge sense of loyalty. [Working for a government agency] wasn't your traditional job. It was still flying [around] doing cool stuff and we had lots of really cool jobs; which I thought made a difference. Now I'm not sure they did. I don't know whether, looking back on it, they did or they didn't, but I believed they did. So I just fell into it more than anything. I don't think it was a conscious decision.

At the same time [a large media organisation] were just starting to take hostile environments training quite seriously so I went onto the team that had the contract for that. Then I worked directly for [the media company] for quite a long time as a freelancer. So I used to do half my year with [the

government agency] and half my year doing freelance stuff, mainly as a trainer; but also did quite a lot overseas, doing training overseas in hostile places. We used to take the training to the locals. Then the [media company] said will you come and work for us full-time. So I was Head of their High Risk Security organisation. Then I went to [a major commercial security consultancy] as a junior consultant and I worked for a very good guy who sort of mentored me as a crisis management consultant. He had already done a Masters Degree in crisis management so he taught me everything I knew, or he knew. After that I went back freelance again; so for about the last 10 years I have been back on the freelance circuit; set up my own company as well, so now run my own company.

I missed the people that I worked with [in the military]. We were in a strong team... the banter, having said that some of it was sexual, it was good – and, you know, you weren't allowed to banter outside; it was politically incorrect. The [government agency] was slightly different because it was mostly military people in the unit I was working with. But when I worked on civilian contracts... the [media organisation] was more politically correct than anything else. So it was quite a culture shock. You had to... I mean in never really used military language when I was in anyway, so I have never had a problem with speaking like a military person, but I found it quite difficult being... not politically correct, but being aware of sensitivities. I mean what you might have seen as a throwaway line. We all made mistakes at the start of the [media organisation] contract. You know, you would make a throwaway line and you would get it in the feedback, "That was a sexist/racist comment", whatever, god. So over time the banter had to change and you were very conscious of being more politically correct than you were in the military where there were no repercussions for that kind of thing.'

In transition Kate displayed some of the same dynamics of 'unintended continuity' expressed by other highly qualified ex-Special Forces soldiers. Despite her intention to engage in a 'proper job' (i.e. civilian work unconnected to the military) her high levels of military capital provided employment options that she was able to pursue with little conscious effort. Notably, for Kate, these opportunities appeared concurrently in both the state and the commercial sphere. As with other participants, her primary motivation was not financial. Instead it was a desire to be engaging in work that had social meaning, in her words, 'giving something back'. In this, Kate expressed both her experience of military service, and that of work in the private security sector, in terms of altruism. The notion of service in

the military and private security as an act of 'caring' appeared gendered, with no male participant referring to their service in these terms. This was coupled with a desire to replicate the self-actualising qualities of military work that characterised her early career in Special Forces; a trait she shared with other participants.

For Kate the intensity and meaning of Special Forces work meant that, despite a real desire to transition to genuinely civilian employment, disengagement from her military identity could not be achieved quickly. Despite this, she proved able to confront her military disposition and, over time, adapt to a civilian work environment. The move into both government agency work and commercial high threat security management provided Kate both an antidote to the anomie of civilian work and a transitional space (Potter, 2015) where disengagement and resocialisation (Jolly, 1996b) could be worked on.

Kate's military experience meant that she possessed both a status (the symbolic capital of Special Forces service) and skills (the somatic capital of covert counter surveillance) that provided her opportunities in both the state and the commercial sectors. This model of hybrid employment was relatively unusual at the time she left the military. However, the incidence of highly qualified former state employees adopting hybrid private/state employment after leaving permanent government roles has increased in recent years. As such, Kate's experience can be seen to presage the hybridity of modern military 'transmigrants' (Lomsky-Feder et al., 2007) who, with the increasing use of reserve forces in overseas military operations may now move frequently between civilian employment and deployment to areas of active conflict. These 'travellers between civilian and military worlds' (Lomsky-Feder et al., 2007:594 quoted in Edmunds et al., 2016) may increasingly mix military style commercial activity with intermediate periods of reserve military service or contract employment with government agencies.

Discussion: Between Institutionalization and Banality - Perpetuating the Military Self in the Civilian Realm

Ruth Jolly (1996b:61) observed that transition to the civilian world tended to be more adequately accomplished by those who were disillusioned with the military

(and thus had already begun to confront their military identity) than those who found themselves the subject of disappointment (i.e. career frustration or disciplinary discharge). For my interviewees with a regular military background the decision to leave the military was most frequently the result of 'strain' (Agnew, 1992) with the military institution. This tension was, in all cases where it was present, a result of the individual's frustration with the occupational culture of the military rather than with the institution's moral values. Unsurprisingly, and unlike the civilian participants of Potter's (2015) study of career transition, service people who moved into private military security were unlikely to display repugnance at the moral conduct of their former profession *per se*.

Disillusion, where it was expressed was more functional than ideological. Frustration with a military institution whose occupational culture was inflexible, that based reward and progression on class (Macdonald, 2004; Jolly 1996b:62-64), gender and institutional needs, rather than merit; and whose practices were simply too rigid and hierarchical to accommodate the individual's subjective need for a sense of progress, formed a common motivation for leaving the military. This 'disappointment' had both positive and negative qualities; the slight of historical injustice was still felt by some participants, but for many the breach between the individual and the institution represented an assertion of personal independence and worth. As Foster (2003:224) observed, the act of joining a force represented the subjugation of the self to the group, so the actions of the disappointed leaver constituted a re-affirmation of autonomy over solidarity. This was most noticeable where thwarted progress was associated with not only 'formal' progression in military rank, but also with a desire to continue conducting roles that provided an emotionally fulfilling experience. In many cases frustration with restrictions implied by the military institution's occupational culture was cast within the context of a divergence of values between the culture of the elite sub-unit, and that of the broader military bureaucracy. This manifested as a form of 'value strain' (Zhang, 2011) as the military institution asserted the equivalency of its needs and values with those of the (elite) sub-unit. This interpretation explains the ostensibly 'institutional' (Moskos, 1986) disposition of participants, who maintained close 'proximity' (Zinn, 2011) with the military values of the elite sub-

unit, while contextualising how frustration with the institution was often key to their decision to leave the military.

Financial factors were not usually a unique or defining factor in the decision to transition from the military to private security. This accorded with descriptions of military life in which financial reward was often described as being unimportant (or at least less important than it was perceived by participants to be in the civilian world). The group most likely to be motivated by financial reward were those who transitioned into 'entrepreneurial' activity. However, even within this group economic motivators were neither dominant nor stood alone as a rationale for transition. The chief factors determining a move into the private security sphere was the desire to replicate the experience of military operations. This was most commonly expressed as either an aspirant continuity; an attempt to prolong the military experience when, for other reasons it was no longer available; or an incidental continuity that was often the result of a lack of strategy rather than a deliberate choice to engage with the sector. This latter type of transition was particularly pronounced among highly qualified former Special Forces senior NCOs, where the transition into private military security required little or no retraining and where the network access to the sector was already implied as part of the social and symbolic capital they had acquired in service.

In almost all cases the move to private military security was motivated by a desire to continue, or recapture a meaningful and self-actualising emotional experience akin to military service. In Terry's case; seeking to replicate the defining experience of warfare and kinship he had encountered in the Parachute Regiment; in Kate's example, a desire to 'contribute' or 'give something back' by continuing to be involved in the type of operational work that had characterised her career as a Special Forces operator. Similarly for Victor, private military security work was 'really interesting' by comparison to civilian alternatives, and for Ian, a means of avoiding the boredom of civilian employment. In all cases the move into private military security work was a means of assuaging the perceived banality of civilian

life¹¹⁵. Where participants had moved into more profit oriented 'entrepreneurial' activity; the impetus for leaving the military remained balanced between strain with the institution (in Stuart's case the enforced end of a career) and the opportunities presented by a life of commerce. Even here, the decision to transition to private security was based more firmly around a continuity of experience than the prospect of economic enrichment. Indeed the financial opportunities of the private sector were finely balanced against the ontological insecurity that characterised the commercial sphere.

As masculinity underpinned the experience of military service, so it underpinned the anticipated emotional fulfilment of private military security work. In general, the masculine nature of both the military and the private security sector was implicit; sufficiently understood between interviewees and researcher that it did not warrant specific reiteration (with the exception of Kate's narrative). However, the relative absence of overt masculinity in the civilian environment by contrast to the military and private military security, was identifiable in many narratives, male and female. David's reference to his decision to engage in maritime security as a 'mid-life crisis' is one such example.

The transitioning experience served to highlight not just the gendered 'regime' (Carreiras, 2006:40-54) of the military institution, but also the notion that the military is a 'gendering' institution. Kate had become socialised to routine sexist and racist language, and to an environment where sexually predatory behaviour was normalised. She had accommodated these practices to the extent that, on leaving the military, she had to guard against her own behaviours. Her adoption of a 'masculine' register resonates with Carreiras (2006) observation that 'token' (Kanter, 1993 in Carreiras, 2006:36) women would either accept isolation or try to become insiders defining themselves against their gendered category. Thus Kate's engagement in an area of military life perhaps more aggressively masculine than any other (Special Forces) displayed similar dynamics to those observed in Martin's study of female Police Officers (1990; cited in Foster, 2003). Here Martin

¹¹⁵ In this respect the decision to engage in the sector was akin to the 'postmodern' motivations for military peacekeeping service identified by Battistelli (1998:643-684) in his study of contemporary Italian soldiers'.

proposed that women police officers either chose to adopt a position where they carry out more feminised roles, and become 'policewomen'; or embraced the masculine institutional culture and become *Policewomen*. Her experience of transition shows that Kate had adopted the latter path becoming a *Special Forces* woman. The question remains whether it would have been possible for her to adopt any other identity and still succeed within the narrow masculine culture of *Special Forces*.

A number of objective factors were also pertinent to the decision to transition from the military to the private security sector. In some cases, the bureaucratic rigidity of the military system, exacerbated by the modern trend towards the reduction of standing armies, led to the individual either seeking employment on the private military security field, or drifting into this field as a result of its perceived similarity to the military. This transition was often facilitated by a 'network' of contacts, developed in service, who acted as 'gatekeepers' to different realms of militarised civilian employment. This 'social capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) was sustained through the strong bonds of mutual dependence created in military service. Thus, 'push' factors were mirrored by the 'pull' of the increasing viability of the commercial commoditisation of the skills and competencies acquired during service. This expansion of opportunity was linked not only to the growth of the private military security field following the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, but also a result of the proliferation of, once secret, military knowledge by former *Special Forces* soldiers. While this can be interpreted as a function the perceived 'peace dividend' that accompanied the end of the Cold War and the conflict in Northern Ireland, it is also indicative of a realignment of the relationship between individuals and the state that accompanied neoliberal reform, the memory and experience of even the most secret forms of state service becoming a tradable commodity.

Thus we build a picture of the former military private security actor as having a range of motivations for transition. Among these the conventionally ascribed motivation of increased financial reward was not predominant. Instead the satisfaction of personal experience that, in its more masculine expression could be interpreted as adventurism, and in its less gendered form, a desire to be involved

in socially meaningful activity was prevalent. More than this, the transition to private security provided the former military actor with a sense of continued 'relevance' when, through the severing of links to the institution or sub-unit that defined their identity, they were required to re-constitute their sense-of-self.

Underpinning the act of transition was the very durable identity created in military service. This identity was inherently traditionally masculine, incentivising a sense of fulfilment associated with action, danger and physicality. Thus, while the act of transitioning to private military security could be based on a desire to distance oneself from this hegemonic culture (as in Kate's case) or to re-capture the un-complex fulfilment of youthful masculinity (as in David's case), the emotional fulfilment sought by employment in the sector remained linked to the conditioned masculinity of the military. Despite this, the experience of transition required an adjustment of the gendered-self, as greater exposure to the civilian world meant that overt expressions of hegemonic masculinity had to be restrained; the act of transition creating a 'dictionary change' (Chan, 1996 and 2004:333) to the individual habitus, aligning them with the less overtly gendered register and practices of the commercial sphere.

The experience of Jolly's (1996b) phases of 'confrontation', 'disassociation' and 'resocialisation' in my participants' transition to military private security were not uniform. In most cases transition was subject to either no resocialisation into the environment of commercial security, or an acculturation that emphasised continuity with, rather than divergence from the military. Even where divergence was emphasised, the relative strength and durability of military identity ensured that civilian attempts at resocialisation were unlikely to significantly eclipse the conditioned and embodied dispositions of the military habitus. In these circumstances success in the civilian sphere could still be achieved where the former service person was sufficiently reflexive and adaptable. Thus, while the emotional fulfilment of military style activity remained a key motivation for seeking private military security employment, it appeared somewhat simplistic to assert that successful transitions were those in which the formative military identity was subsumed by resocialisation into the civilian realm (Jolly, 1996b). Increasingly migration between civilian and military employment was a viable

option; and success in one field did not de-facto imply failure in another. The successful private security practitioner was able to adjust to a liminal identity that sat neither wholly in the military nor the civilian realm. The question remained how the military disposition manifested itself in commercial security and what were its implications? This is the subject to which I now turn.

Chapter 6 Experiences of Private Military Security

The conditioned behaviours of the military had emerged as the thread of continuity between my former-military interviewees' past and present work, and remained the foundation of their sense-of-self even after extensive periods of civilian employment. As such, military norms and behaviours, often little changed by any intermediary transitional experience, had the potential to both influence and determine the way in which they viewed their role as private security actors. Moreover, these formative experiences could be seen to shape and define the choices and decisions they made when conducting this role. Thus, the nature of the field could not be fully understood simply through the evolution of the industry's relations with civil society or the development of regulation. It was defined also by the actions and perceptions of security practitioners working on a multitude of contracts across the breadth of the field.

I wanted to understand how these perceptions and practices coalesced to create 'motivational and cognitive structures that constitute the practical world as a world of goals already reached and objects provided with a permanent teleological character' (Bourdieu, 1980:88 quoted in Belvedere 2013:1095). As the private military security field developed so had the experience of actors in the industry. Exploring how participants had, across time, understood and contextualised the day-to-day business of providing security in the private sector was a necessary step in understanding the logic of the field. My interviewees provided details of circumstances that both typified their experience of private military security at different times, and illustrated the boundaries and decisions that they considered defined their work. By examining these circumstances it was possible to discern those facets of the private military security sector that were enduring, and those were more mutable or transitory. Through this, further insight could be gained into the genesis and effect of the structural changes to the industry described in Chapter 3, and what these meant to the people working in the field of private military security who experienced them.

The Circuit

As I describe in Chapter 3, the early 'Circuit' years of the modern private security field were dominated by a small group of ex-Special Forces veterans. The limited size of this market, in terms of both participating security practitioners and their relatively discreet group of high-net-worth and corporate clients, meant that the majority of work carried out during this period was conducted by individuals as security consultants or in small teams (e.g. training teams or close protection details). The British state was involved in this work on a number of levels; tacitly providing authorisation for work in overseas jurisdictions in which the government had interests, or actively working through private companies or individuals to support government aims overseas, such as the training of foreign Special Forces by private companies. At times, particularly in the case of contracts undertaken for Middle Eastern royalty this had a 'hybrid' quality, with the delineation between state and private interests often quite opaque. However, direct UK government contracting of military private security was rare, or at least carried out at very considerable arm's length.

Much of the consultancy and advisory activity conducted during this period was, in essence, military knowledge work. Here the symbolic capital of elite military service, as well as the social capital of unconventional soldiering (contacts with police, intelligence services, government officials and non-state groups) were important in establishing credibility with potential clients, and forging links with other military and civil actors in the operational theatre. Training contracts involved the deployment of both the symbolic and fighting capital of elite military service; the ability to establish credibility as a military operator and to actively demonstrate and transfer somatic military knowledge without, in most cases, engaging in combat. Other tasks, such as close protection relied more directly on the potential enactment of somatic capability in the protection of a VIP client, although even here, the expectation of violent confrontation or use-of-force was less routine than became the case after the Iraq invasion of 2003.

In this milieu the defining decisions of the private military security actor centred around the discourse and arbitration between security practitioners and foreign civil and military organisations in the operational environment. Key to this were

decisions relating to the proposed use-of-force in pursuit of the private client's aims; albeit a use-of-force that would relatively rarely be enacted directly by the security practitioner themselves. Craig described just such an operational environment working for a corporate client in Kashmir in the early 1990s¹¹⁶.

'We were there from ninety-three to ninety five as quite a big team, eight or nine men, spread over four or five different sites. And the main threat was a kidnap threat. In fact the liaison through the [Pakistan] Special Branch said that the militants, they used to call them militants, had passed a message to me that they know about the Englishmen. It was a French company we were working for, but they knew that the security team were English. They said "we know about the Englishmen and as long as they just look after the equipment, which is what we understand they are told to do, they will be alright, but if they start interfering with us that will be another thing".' (Craig)

Craig described how a group of militants had attacked one of the client's outstations and stolen a radio rebroadcasting mast¹¹⁷. The attack was assessed by Pakistani Police and local employees to be the culmination of the militants' basic military training and, as such did not represent a direct increase in threat to the expatriate workforce. Craig went on:

They gave us the option 'carry'¹¹⁸ after that, 9mm pistols. One guy wanted to [carry a pistol]. The more experienced guys, most of, us refused. We just didn't see the need. You see, they [the militants] knew everything we did on site. If we were carrying, they would know and that would just escalate things, they would be more suspicious of us and next time, if there was a next time, they would come in harder. They were not targeting [the French company or project team]. So most us, the more experienced guys refused. So, basically by [one person] being armed he put all of us in danger, and the client as well. There was no need for it.

Maybe I am saying it for tribal reasons, but when all the people on the Circuit were coming from two-two¹¹⁹, the sort of person who had got into two-two had been selected for two-two. One of the procedures is assessing self-discipline. They want you to be able to go away on your own and do the job without any structure. So when they get put into positions on their

¹¹⁶ See Thornbury (2011) for a comparison of this incident with the circumstances of Craig's work in Algeria.

¹¹⁷ A mast used to boost the range of a radio broadcast.

¹¹⁸ Carry a weapon

¹¹⁹ Two-two, the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment.

own with power and weapons, it doesn't faze them and they have nothing in their heads in the first place.

[The team member who wanted a weapon in Kashmir] had been in the Regiment, but he had only been a long weekend basically¹²⁰. He didn't have a good track record. He wouldn't have survived. Well, he went up to the six-year point. He was a buffoon, but selection doesn't filter everybody out who shouldn't be there. It takes a few years sometimes, but that guy, he was off the Circuit. Not purely because of the weapons thing, but that went along with other things. It was very, very controlled by your own... you had your own standards. I suppose in the old days of the Circuit it was almost a family. The guy in Kashmir who wanted weapons, that was the last job he ever did on the Circuit.' (Craig)

Craig emphasised the rationality and self-discipline of the Special Forces actor as central to an informally generated consensus on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Where a practitioner's judgement was suspect, such as a desire to retain and use of firearms in an environment where this may have exacerbated the security threat, they were sanctioned by an unofficial, but effective 'black-balling' (Craig). This self-policing function was perceived to reduce the opportunity for behavioural excesses and represented a form of self-regulation effective across the small number of firms active in the market at this time.

During this period the major factors determining both suitability for employment, and the social boundaries of acceptable and transgressive conduct within the sector, were determined by standards derived directly from the participants' military past. The process of deploying onto a security task rarely involved any formal induction, training or preparation (Thornbury, 2011). Thus, the Circuit operated largely without any discrete standards for the conduct of security in the civil sphere, with practitioners adapting military training and practices as they saw fit to address the clients' needs. This created a general lack of distinction between the military and civil fields that could lead to ambiguity in establishing the bounds of ethical behaviour. Craig described a contract that he undertook conducting training for an anti-poaching unit in Africa:

'A classic case, two of us did a two-month training job in Botswana for an anti-poaching unit. We would like to think we're both fairly sane and good

¹²⁰ Slang for only having completed a short period of service.

operators. We did an AMIC¹²¹ course basically. We had three things to achieve, a change over from Siminovs to SLRs¹²² (so we had to teach them SLR one to eight¹²³). We missed out the bayonet fighting. Then we had to train them to be instructors and then we had to run an NCOs cadre. All this in two months. Now, we got our heads together before we went away and sketched it all out. Again, this was on a fag packet, there is nothing in writing from [the employing security company].’ (Craig)

In his example Craig, spent a period of time living in the bush and working with the game wardens, who were all civilian civil service employees, and training them in tactics drawn directly from military manuals. The one concession made to the civilian nature of the anti-poaching unit being that they were not instructed in the use of the bayonet. Craig recalled that,

‘At night we used to have them put a guard on, just to bugger them about and get them into the training, because they were civil servants but we wanted them to start thinking they were military.’

Indeed, Craig considered this work have been identical to that which he would have carried out during his service in Special Forces, albeit with fewer staff:

‘Two of us were doing what a nine man team would do in the Regiment. That’s the commercial world, two men doing nine men’s job. Some people couldn’t adjust to it. But, if you are good, it’s a good challenge and you can do it.’ (Craig)

As the task developed it became clear to Craig and his colleague the danger posed to the game wardens by groups of Zimbabwean poachers. These groups included former ZANU-PF¹²⁴ guerrillas who were armed with automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenades. Craig suggested to the head of Botswana’s game wardens (a former French Foreign Legionnaire) that a more offensive strategy should be used to tackle the poaching problem. This involved tracking the poachers following a kill, predicting the point at which they would cross the border back into Zimbabwe and then, using game wardens transported by

¹²¹ AMIC, Army Methods of Instruction Course. Training that prepared soldiers to teach military skills to other soldiers.

¹²² Self Loading Rifles.

¹²³ Lessons one to eight in the British Army weapon-handling course.

¹²⁴ ZANU-PF Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front. A military group involved in the Rhodesian bush war of 1964 to 1979.

helicopter, mounting an ambush that would aim to kill the poachers as they left Botswana. Craig confirmed that the anti-poaching unit had subsequently employed this concept and it had resulted in 4 poachers being shot dead. He observed:

‘Thinking about it in a philosophical moment; I wonder what the Guardian reader would think about that and the Greenpeace people. I saved two rhino but I got four benighted poachers shot. What do you want? What is most important?’ (Craig)

From Craig’s examples it was clear that Circuit era security work involved the enactment of skills and knowledge drawn directly from military practice; there existed no intermediary discipline that adjusted this learning to the civilian environment. Thus the training and advice provided by Craig facilitated the adoption of practices that were much more offensive in nature than those previously practiced by the civilian client organisation. Craig was conscious that his civilian status, and that of the wildlife protection team he was training, made the facilitation of offensive operations ethically questionable. However, no governance structure or received practice existed at this time through which this dilemma could be reviewed. Further, Craig constructed the ethical aspects of his decision making as existing outside the field of his direct responsibility.

Despite this, while the act of training anti-poaching wardens required the use and display of somatic military knowledge, Craig and his colleague did not accompany the trainees on operations or engage in combat themselves. Instead their input was limited to more traditional knowledge work (i.e. consultancy and instruction) rather than the personal enactment of somatically conditioned ‘fighting capital’. As such, the culture of practice within the field of private security at this time was one where the direct use of force by private military contractors was relatively limited and the use of firearms infrequent rather than routine. Practitioners’ participation in the sector was contingent upon them demonstrating rationality in respect of the use-of-force that implied threats should be avoided before they were confronted. Thus, while the general lack of distinction between military operations and civilian consultancy generated the potential for militarised behaviours to be propagated, the rational imperative of private actors avoiding

personal engagement in potentially escalatory forms of physical violence was an element of the 'doxa' of the field during this period.

By the 1990s privatised military activity had come to the attention of civil society organisations. This was in no small part the result of the increased use of private military security companies in supporting roles by transnational humanitarian organisations engaged in the newly created foreign policy endeavour of 'humanitarian intervention'. The use of contracted military services by organisations like the United Nations created both the pressure and incentive for private security actors to engage in combat operations. This gave rise to increasingly nuanced decisions about the operational demarcation between 'defensive' security and support orientated tasks, and more 'offensive' roles. Roger gave the example in which his company provided commercially contracted staff to crew armoured vehicles in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia:

'In the Balkans the [peacekeeping] battalions that did not have armoured vehicles were supplied armoured vehicles by UNPROFOR¹²⁵. They provided Czech OT64 APCs¹²⁶. Well, blow-me-down, the battalion that doesn't have any vehicles can't maintain them either – so they asked, "can you find some mechanics?". Yes we'll find some Czech mechanics for you. "By the way, that battalion that can't maintain them also can't drive them without wrecking them; so will you provide drivers?". You are now taking part in peacekeeping patrols, at which point we 'drew the line'. We will provide drivers, we will provide anything you want short of turret-crew, who must be blue bereted nationally enrolled peacekeepers; licenced to carry a weapon and to make decisions about its use. We will do anything else but we draw the line. We will not make the decision to open fire, nor will we be able to open fire in any circumstance.' (Roger)

Thus, while issues relating to the appropriate exercise of force by commercial non-state actors became more acute, the 'circumspection' of the early Circuit era towards the engagement of private actors in direct hostilities prevailed. Despite this, the direct support of 'humanitarian intervention' operations acted as a gestation period in which the legitimate engagement of private companies in active elements of armed conflict became a possibility; a boundary shift that is

¹²⁵ UNPROFOR, the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia.

¹²⁶ APC, Armored Personnel Carrier

consistent with Kaldor's (2012) observation of the weakening distinction between state and non-state actors in 'New War' conflicts. However, the tenuous consensus of the Circuit, and indeed the nature of the field itself, was to change profoundly in the early years of the 21st Century.

Iraq and the Global War on Terror

'The thing which made the most change was Iraq. It was like floodgates were opened because there was a phenomenal amount of money poured into various companies operating in Iraq. The reconstruction companies suddenly found themselves in a situation where they were operating in what was becoming an increasingly hostile environment. They were very concerned about the safety of the workers and there was this scramble to get the best security operatives, the ex-Special Forces people, working on their jobs and there were so many positions required that companies just couldn't find enough of those sorts of people.' (Victor)

While the Circuit era had seen a rough alignment between supply and demand for private military security services, Iraq caused a change both in terms of the volume and the nature of the expertise required. The emergence of the insurgency in Iraq after the invasion gave rise to circumstances where, on a large scale, British military security contractors were routinely engaged the potential use-of-force while conducting commercial security work. As such, the corporeal capacity for the private security actor to effectively respond to a security threat through the use of weapons (their fighting capital) became a key requirement for clients. Where in the Circuit somatic military knowledge had been only one element of the capital required by the security practitioner, in Iraq this became the dominant, and in some cases unique, requirement. This was to change the nature of labour within the field as well as the constitution of the workforce. With these changes the specialism, discretion and exclusivity of the Circuit, with its tight-knit bonds of informal control had ended. However, the structures of a mature industry were yet to emerge. Victor observed:

'Prior to Iraq people knew each other, you had people working in the London office of Control Risk, ArmourGroup, KMS and Saladin who knew people; as often as not they knew them because they worked with them at some stage in the Regiment¹²⁷. Even if they didn't know them

¹²⁷ 'Regiment', colloquial for SAS.

personally and they never worked with them, they knew them by reputation. So there was this source of people who they could fairly safely pick from knowing that they were getting a certain standard. They would know that that person had gone through a very rigorous selection process to get into the Regiment for a start, they would have known that that person would have done a quite long and extensive VIP protection training course so they would know all about the body drills, the foot drills, the car drills, the anti-ambush drills and all the rest of it.

Iraq was when things really started to change. Initially it was mainly ex-regiment people, but even by that stage we were seeing more ex-paras, ex-marines, ex-infantry, which I didn't have a problem with because of the type of role we were asking them to do. It wasn't specifically close protection in an environment like Paris or London it was very much along military lines, military convoys, escorting from the border up to wherever they were doing the work and then setting out a perimeter security and then at the end of the day coming in, in a military convoy, an armed convoy, so there wasn't a problem there.

But then as time went on and they were poached and filched by other companies we started to get people coming who might have been in the TA¹²⁸ and then we were getting the odd person who knew someone who had been in the TA, and the standard really dropped. There were people coming into Iraq being given a weapon and put on security that quite literally I wouldn't allow to look after my flipping dog overnight, because some of them were just somebody who'd done a bit of bouncing on a door in some pub in Gateshead or wherever it was. And some of the smaller companies, the fly by night companies that were springing up all over the place were a lot less scrupulous about it, and there was some real dross coming into Iraq at that stage.' (Victor)

The increased demand for military security practitioners meant that security companies began to extend their recruitment, initially to groups of former service people from conventional units of the military, and to those whose experience was in reserve military units or other uniformed services. Eventually even those with only commercial security experience, or with no military or security experience at all, were finding employment. Victor linked declining standards to the financial incentives created by this increase in demand; but also to the type of adventurism that the culture of the Circuit era had acted to contain:

¹²⁸ Territorial Army.

‘Probably, what most people would do that sort of job for was the money; because at that time the salaries were relatively high. They could probably work out there for three months and earn what they’d earn in a year in the UK. I’d bump into someone while I was waiting at the border and they’d say “You want to see the last bunch they bloody sent out to us, minicab drivers, ex-bouncers and people with no military experience at all who really had no experience of handling weapons”. To be honest a lot of it was appalling; but I think at that time the incentive was probably mainly money. I think for a lot of these, the ex-bouncer, minicab driver type person it was also the, “I’m working out in Iraq, driving around, I’ve got this Land Cruiser and I got a pistol and AK”, so I think a lot of it was also the kudos of being able to go back to their mates in Scunthorpe or wherever they were from and saying I’m working for such and such out in the Middle East, AK weapons, ammunition all over the place and pistols and (exasperation)’ (Victor)

Thus, with the growth and pluralisation of the market the constitution and disposition of actors in the field changed, and with it the relationships of capital. Initially economic capital was channelled into military style armed protective security. In turn the exchange value of the capital of somatic military knowledge increased. This raised the dominance of financial reward as a motivating factor for labour market entry; but also changed the experiential nature of private security work. The field now provided increased opportunities for the enactment of somatic capital of violent force and this attracted individuals, military and otherwise, who sought this form of emotional reward. This change caused a sense of rootlessness, among the older generation of actors involved in the Circuit era of security provision as the informal standards to which they had become accustomed were ‘diluted’. This *anomie* was mirrored the general disorder created by the change of norms associated with the early years of post-9-11 foreign policy. In Tony Blair’s words at the initiation of the Global War on Terror ‘The Kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us re-order this world around us’ (Guardian, 2001b).

The dominant experience of private military security in Iraq at this early stage was that of work in an increasingly disordered and insecure social environment. During the Circuit era, the chief role for security contractors had been knowledge work, liaising with de-facto authorities managing or advising on security

measures; close protection work, where it had been conducted, had been specialised and discreet. By contrast, in Iraq private security staff were now engaged in the direct provision of armed security in small teams operating in an increasingly hostile environment. The routine application of (potentially lethal) levels of force by private contractors presented some practitioners with difficulties. The legitimacy of this experiment in the privatised application of coercive force was ambiguous. Arron, a former Special Forces NCO explained:

‘When we went into Iraq I was with [a media organisation] so we were basically right up behind the FEBA¹²⁹, right up behind the fighting. As we pushed forward there was no kind of order, no government. The Iraqi government had collapsed. So there was no real order and we had to make our own order, our own procedures. First we looked at what the client needed to achieve, what they had to do to get their story. I used the collective experience of my team. The experience we had from working in hostile areas in the military. The Rules of engagement, the ‘yellow card’¹³⁰ type rules that we had used in the past. But it was a moral [dilemma], because when you are working for a corporation you can’t quite take the moral high ground like you do in the military, where it’s all clear and what you doing is sanctioned by the government. There was no government, so we did what we needed to keep the client safe.

Over time it was obvious that the threat, the situation, was getting worse. I took [my journalist client] through some weapons training. Nothing fancy, just loading, unloading, making-safe¹³¹. Pistols and AKs, basic kit we were carrying. Some of them weren’t happy, most of them were. But I said, “look, I need you to know this, not just for your safety, but for mine too. If it gets like that, fuck the rules, you need to do what you need to do to get out”. (Arron)

Thus, where the environment demanded that extreme levels of force may be required to ensure the security and safety of private clients (and their accompanying security staff), and in the absence of any rules or norms to differentiate state military or constabulary activity from commercial security practice, practitioners fell back on their military experience. However, in so doing were they were prone to breach traditional boundaries, in this example those

¹²⁹ Forward Edge of Battle Area, the ‘front-line’ of fighting.

¹³⁰ The rules of engagement for the British military in Northern Ireland, carried by every soldier and printed on a yellow card.

¹³¹ Ensuring a weapon is unloaded and in a safe state.

between combatants and non-combatants, and promote the values of 'exceptionalism' that characterised service in the military generally, and Special Forces in particular.

A similar debate was played out, with greater or lesser degrees of reflective sophistication across thousands of contracts and hundreds of private security companies and client organisations. At its heart was the difference between the practice of force by state militaries, where 'offensive' operations were legitimised through the link to sovereign power as an embodiment of national (or transnational) common good; and the use of force by commercial entities to protect their own assets, personnel and operations. Victor explained how he viewed these differences in role:

'[In the war in Dhofar] We had 25 pounders¹³² literally laying down a barrage [of shells] in front of us and as that advanced we advanced behind it. We had the jets coming in and mortars and, in an environment like that, you're not defending or protecting a thing, because if you do that you're going to lose the war or the battle, you go out and you dominate ground, you put out ambushes, you conduct searches to look for signs of where [the enemy] might have weapons or ammunition. So you become very, very proactive and you go looking for the bad guys to engage them, to kill them or to deny them the freedom of movement around the place. Whereas in Iraq, you don't do that, in a private company environment, for instance my role on that particular task for [a multinational oilfield services company] was ensuring security when people came from the border up to where they were working in the Rumaila oil fields. Protecting them when they were operating in the fields through the day, doing their maintenance repairs and then escorting them back. You're keeping them safe travelling from A to B, keeping that area safe with a safe perimeter while they're on the ground and escorting them back. At no point do you escort everybody back to the border and then go out at night looking for the bad guys and setting ambushes up. So yeah it's a very, very different thing. The role itself is very different because all you're involved in doing is protecting people, assets or installations' (Victor in Thornbury, 2011)

Commercial 'security' was seen to have a more defensive and protective character than military counter-insurgency. Victor considered that the more 'passive, reactive' parts of the conventional military role were identical to those carried out

¹³² A field artillery piece

by private security. Thus, commercial security was conceived of as a more restricted version of conventional military operations; but nonetheless a position within a range of behaviours the ambit of which included more aggressive options. Colin a former infantry officer, worked on teams conducting close protection and convoy escort in Iraq, and then moved into a role coordinating operations for a number of teams. He described how in 2005-2006 there had been an increase in the frequency and competence of insurgent attacks on civilian and military convoys. He illustrated how the 'offensive' orientation of military training could manifest in private security convoy protection operations:

'In the first company I worked for they were basically using the military system, the card Alpha¹³³. We did a week of training in country. At that time the drills were quite similar to the military. That changed a bit over time, [for example] you were allowed to use warning shots as a deterrent, which you couldn't do in the military, certainly not when I was in. The weapons were different as well, M4, the SIG, AK47. They took it at a bit of a slower pace in training than you would [in the military], because some people hadn't handled weapons for a time. And you do a range package with vehicles. There were different drills as well. You can't be 'all systems go' because you have a principal¹³⁴, but if you came under fire it was basically the same principles, fire, manoeuvre, hit a baseline, reconsider your options. That was just back-to-basics'¹³⁵. (Colin)

One of the issues was that some teams would follow up very hard when they had a contact¹³⁶. You know, debus¹³⁷, pairs fire-and-manoeuve¹³⁸. Take on the bad guys. You would ask the team leader, why did you do that? Why did you not just drive through? They would say "why not? We had the kit, we had the people, why not?" The problem is if you are going in very hard are you still acting in self-defence, or in defence of the principal? If the bad guys are bugging-out¹³⁹ is there still a threat? Or are you really doing the job of the security forces¹⁴⁰? Some teams were definitely too aggressive. When I was doing ops¹⁴¹ you had to keep a grip on that, that tendency. The client is only paying for you to get the equipment or the

¹³³ The British Armed Forces rules of engagement governing the use of armed force (MoD, 2018:56).

¹³⁴ The principal is the person being protected by the security close protection detail

¹³⁵ A return to basic military principles.

¹³⁶ An ambush or an exchange of fire.

¹³⁷ Exit the vehicle.

¹³⁸ Move in pairs, with one person firing, or prepared to fire at the enemy while the other moved.

¹³⁹ Withdrawing.

¹⁴⁰ The Coalition and Iraqi military.

¹⁴¹ Working in an operations role.

principle to the work-site, or wherever. That's all. If you have gone in hard, what happens to the next team who go through that village? It tended to be the very aggressive companies that got taken on a lot, some of the yanks¹⁴² were much more full-on, and got taken on more than we did.' (Colin)

A number of interviewees described how the increasingly effective insurgency against the Coalition presence in Iraq led to a debate across the professional field about the response to the growing number of attacks on convoys. At an operational level this centred on the appropriateness of covering certain vulnerable areas on the company's convoy routes with 'pickets' of armed men occupying static positions overlooking likely ambush points or pre-emptive patrols in areas where insurgents were thought to congregate prior to an attack. While the logic of this approach was clear from a military perspective it risked drawing private companies into activity that was no longer protective in nature. This tendency was tempered both by concerns that this type of 'mission creep' would involve private companies in activity that replicated the counterinsurgency of the military, and by the fact that any such more expansive role required funding that was not forthcoming from existing clients (Thornbury, 2011).

Establishing the demarcation point between more defensively oriented commercial security activity and more 'offensive' modes of conduct was complicated by a second factor, the changing political and legal environment. This was reflected in pronouncements made by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The first of these was the extension of military immunity from prosecution for infractions of local law to civilians under the direction or command of the Coalition military powers or Provisional Authority (CPA, 2002). The second was the alleged declaration by CPA Administrator, Ambassador Paul Bremer, that he wanted private security companies to become actively engaged in using force to stabilise the security situation in the country. While the response to these policies by private military security companies was seen, at least in part, to be a function of nationality (with American companies prone to the adoption of a more aggressive stance and British companies more recalcitrant); this signalled a clear

¹⁴² American companies.

political departure from the standards and norms of private force that had prevailed throughout the Circuit era.

Despite professed misgivings by practitioners, the socially and politically disorganised environment in Iraq, coupled with the burgeoning insurgency, rapid expansion and change to the private security labour markets, and the normalisation of the direct use of armed force by contractors, together created conditions where opportunities for transgressive behaviour increased. Key to this was that security contracts in Iraq saw former soldiers operating in small team structures with access to the means of coercive force (Rothe and Ross, 2010) carrying out tasks that were indistinguishable from those they had carried out in the military. These security details operated with little expectation of external monitoring or investigation in the event of an incident¹⁴³. Within this structure ethical and moral decision-making was defined at team and contract level. This allowed divergent cultures to develop and exceptional practices to flourish. Gary, commenting on a former colleague, observed how this situation provided conditions for individuals to fulfil the unrealised potential of their former military service with disproportionate, but self-actualising violence.

‘You remember Darren¹⁴⁴ who worked on the security side for [a private security company] in Iraq. He was in [another country] doing mine clearance work but had been made redundant. After that he went to work as a shooter¹⁴⁵ doing convoy work in Iraq, although he was also EOD¹⁴⁶ qualified. [Name] was his project manager. He used to tell me how fucked up he was. I mean you could see it. You’d see it when you ran into him. He always had found it difficult in the commercial world. With less hierarchies he was always trying to take over the operations that he was involved with. That’s what got him dismissed from [two private security companies]. In Iraq, he really lost it. He was brilliant, a really good bloke when he was in the mob¹⁴⁷, his blokes would do anything for him. He ‘bled green’, you know, lived for the army, typical airborne warrior.

¹⁴³ While some contracts required the reporting of contacts with the hostile forces and the use of force by contractors, there is some evidence that, particularly in the early years of private security engagement in Iraq, these rules were loosely adhered to.

¹⁴⁴ Not his real name.

¹⁴⁵ A weapon carrying member of a security detail

¹⁴⁶ Explosive Ordnance Demolition

¹⁴⁷ The Army

Hated craphats ¹⁴⁸. He'd fight anyone and in that [military] environment you know, that is OK. Well, it's tolerated as long as you're good at your job. He was always frustrated that he had never passed selection [for UK Special Forces]. He was super fit and failing that course really rankled with him as there were guys less fit than him who had passed. He also never did much operational work when he had been in the mob. He just missed the Falklands. I think that was a thing with him 'cos he saw himself as a field soldier. He really let go in Iraq. He came back to UK openly telling stories of killing people [while working] on the convoys. That had made people concerned. Other guys were saying that it was bit over the top. You know, people were getting brassed¹⁴⁹ when they didn't need it. He was an EOD operator, so he could be doing something else. But he moved from EOD work to the convoys because there was a better chance of seeing action.' (Gary in Thornbury, 2011)

This description demonstrates how the re-creation of military style sub-units to conduct the high-threat work of convoy protection created circumstances akin to the 'hyper-invested' (Wilson, 2010 and 2016 in Burk, 2018:14-16) 'deviant cohesion' (Venneson, 2015 in Burk 2018:13) observed by Burk in military units in Northern Ireland. In Burk's view the potential for disproportionate violence in military sub-units had a structural cause as, 'instincts finely honed in training, can also lead to acts of deviancy if a unit's desire to assert its absolute physical dominance over an area of operations and/or over rival groups of young men is not tempered by the wider institution' (2018:15). This tension between institutional aims and sub-unit cultures could create a 'negative strategic consequence' (2018:13) as the violence of the deviant sub-unit undermined the legitimacy of the wider counterinsurgency. Darren was described as using the relative paucity of institutional control in the private security environment to enact a disposition towards emotionally fulfilling, but commercially and strategically counterproductive violence that, to a greater or lesser extent, had been constrained by the more institutional structures of military service.

Kevin, was one of the few participants without a regular military background to have worked on 'the Circuit', and in armed protective security in the post 9/11 environment. He observed just such a dynamic:

¹⁴⁸ Soldiers from a non-airborne units

¹⁴⁹ Killed

Kevin: 'Towards the latter part of the Libya contract they began bringing in the ex-military guys who had been out in Iraq. And they were having to tell them, you know we're not out in Iraq now. You can't just walk around and shoot at people and such, you've got to change your attitude. A lot of these guys had worked for [a major UK based security company] on the big contracts that [the company] had out there. And they were all telling the stories of what they got up to. And you just think; how did they get away with it for so long?'

Interviewer: "What sort of things?"

Kevin: 'You know, shooting at civilians. When they first got out there if anyone got too close instead of following orders they'd just put a couple of rounds through the windscreen and not care less. And whether it was bravado or not, I don't know. You just used to think how did you get away with it? I suppose the first part of Iraq it was like Dodge city until they got a bit of order. But, yeah, they all talked about it. You had to say to them, "you've just got to tone it down a bit, you can't go around doing the same things that you used to do in Iraq". They were all mates from the Iraq contract so that was how they got talking about it. I heard what had been going on, sitting in the car and people would be saying, "oh you know so-and-so, he was a right nutter. He'd do whatever he wanted"; you hadn't got anyone to answer to. Whereas in Libya there were a lot of people to answer to. You were working for the British Embassy and that was different to working on, say, the Matrix contract¹⁵⁰.' (Kevin)

The expansion of the military private security market in Iraq meant that, for a period, this type of transgressive behaviour went unaddressed. The rapid growth of the field meaning that pre-employment screening of practitioners was often lax and even contractors with a known track record of excessive behaviour, or drug and alcohol abuse could, with impunity, move between companies to avoid censure (Thornbury, 2011:26; Pelton, 2006:341). Issues of sexual misconduct also began to emerge from the environment of Iraq and Afghan private security (Snell, 2011; Brooking and Schmeidl, 2008), providing further evidence of the link between transgression and hyper-masculine contract/team cultures¹⁵¹.

As civil society and media attention focussed on evidence of misconduct and

¹⁵⁰ For a history of this contract see Hagedorn (2014:52 and 89) and White (2017).

¹⁵¹ Allegations of sexual violence and exploitation pre date the Iraq war and have been levelled at US security contractors working in the Balkans (Guardian 2001a). Snell (2011) draws a clear link between legal immunity for contractors from local law and instances of sexual violence.

transgression, so public concern over the new phenomenon of private security grew. This had other repercussions, with the expansion of private security in Iraq serving to establish the role of the private security contractor as a separate category of actor in the conflict and post-conflict environment. For the first time this meant that public organisations, including the military, came under pressure to define their position on, and relationship with the emerging industry¹⁵². This provided a challenge to many who saw their involvement in private security as representing a continuation of their military identity.

‘One of the things about Iraq is that it challenged the military a lot. I was surprised, because we were all ex-forces and we didn’t really see ourselves as different. We were all doing the same job. But I remember incidents where contractors got injured and the military would not come in to evacuate. There was an incident in Basra where an Australian guy got injured and the RAF wouldn’t come in to evacuate because he wasn’t a British national. That made you realise that what you were doing was different. The support you get in the military was not there. It was a shock because more than once we had crashed-out¹⁵³ to help military callsigns.¹⁵⁴

I came back to UK and I was looking to get qualified in emergency planning. You know, strengthen my CV. I did a course at [a college]. There were some council people and an Army Sergeant on the course. When I mentioned I was ex-forces we had a chat. At that time there was a lot of casualties [in Iraq] and I mentioned I’d been out there with [a private security firm]. He just looked at me and said, “Well they asked for it, they took the money, that’s their choice”. It was funny ‘cause it makes you realise that when you are out, you are out. But also all those guys who we lost or got injured with [private security company], a few years before were blokes like him, good blokes from good regiments and he’s a soldier looking down on them. I had to go and take a walk.’ (Nigel)

Thus Iraq had the quality of a ‘grand experiment’ in hybrid public/private state building in an environment of active insurgency. As the frailties of private security practice began to emerge, tension with both state and commercial clients

¹⁵² Kelty and Bierman (2013) demonstrate similar ambivalence towards contractors among the US military personnel.

¹⁵³ Crashed-out, to deploy rapidly to a situation or incident.

¹⁵⁴ Callsign, a military unit, denoting their unique indicator on a radio network.

increased¹⁵⁵. This tension was reflected in the broader 'field' of commercial and government contracting with which military private security companies had become engaged. New paradigms were developed by organisations relying on private security. With this the logic of practice, and relations of capital within the field began to rationalise:

'To the clients it was obvious, you've got people with no background working for these companies, why would you pay for an expat to do convoy escort, or guard an installation when all you're getting is some ex-bouncer? It really started with the Gurkhas. You could get a Gurkha cheaper than a western expat and they were reliable. So companies that could provide Gurkhas competitively; first it was British Army Gurkhas, then Indian Army or Nepal Army, then it was other Indian or Pakistani soldiers. Then the US companies had their links with South America and you got the Colombians coming in and all sorts. But for the clients it didn't make difference by then. They just needed a guy with a gun on a convoy or on a site to get their insurance. It didn't make sense to be paying for [western] expats. [...] Then you got more of the Iraqis being employed and that was political 'cause it was like the Iraqis policing themselves. But for the [client] companies it was better because Iraqis shooting each other wasn't news.' (Nigel)

With this rationalisation the opportunities for former British service people began to reduce. The commercial impetus favoured companies who had the ability to recruit economically competitive 'third country nationals' (TCN) and manage them effectively (Spearin, 2007:551). This placed those actors with existing experience working in a commercial environment with local (Iraqi) or other security staff of non-western origin at an advantage. With this, work that involved western expatriates in the direct application of force began to reduce and, as employment opportunities declined, some selectivity returned to the labour market. The possession of narrow conventional somatic 'fighting capital' was no longer sufficient to obtain security work in Iraq. Broader expertise, including commercial security qualifications and the cultural acumen associated with training and instructing foreign military forces became pre-requisites for work in the region. This reduced opportunities for newer entrants to the field with more limited military experience and privileged more highly qualified former military

¹⁵⁵ Kelty and Bierman, 2013 illustrated the ambivalence with which soldiers and government employees began to view security contractors.

personnel (i.e. Special Forces and those 'green army' soldiers who had significant experience training and operating with local Iraqi forces). Nonetheless, Iraq had set a precedent for the large scale and direct exchange of military capital in the field of international commerce. As opportunities in Iraq contracted others were opening up.

Maritime Security

While having its roots in the same basic economic and political dynamics as the ground based revolution in security practice seen in Iraq, the maritime security boom of 2008-2009 was to develop under very different circumstances. While piracy had engendered a threat in some areas of transit for international shipping, the field of maritime commerce did not remotely resemble the unstructured and socially disorganised environment of the Iraq insurgency. Indeed, maritime commerce was characterised by a surfeit of regulation, rather than its absence. Private military security was incorporated into an existing structure of risk management developed and codified by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)¹⁵⁶. By 2009, the framework of higher-level laws and regulations mentioned by David in Chapter 3 had developed into a series of 'lower tier' (but nonetheless more detailed) guidelines for shipping transiting 'the High Risk Area'. This became known as 'Best Management Practice' (IMO, 2009, 2010 and 2011) and by 2010 the IMO had established the international legal basis to require action by national governments and transitional organisations to bring the security situation off the Somalia coast under control¹⁵⁷. This included a resolution in 2011 that sought to ensure compliance with the Best Management Practice issued by

¹⁵⁶ The International Maritime Organisation had adopted resolutions to deal with piracy beginning in 1983 with resolution A.545(13) on "Measures to prevent acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships". This was updated in 1991 with resolution A.683(17) on 'Prevention and suppression of acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships' and in 1993 with resolution A.738(18) on 'Measures to prevent and suppress piracy and armed robbery against ships'.

¹⁵⁷ Resolution A.1002(25) on "Piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters off the coast of Somalia" through which the Assembly of the IMO recommended that action be taken by Governments, the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, the Council, the Maritime Safety Committee and the Secretary-General of the United Nations act to address the security situation the High Risk Area

the IMO¹⁵⁸ and resulted in the generation of specific guidance on the use of armed private security by shipmasters and owners (IMO, 2012). All of these measures were driven by the increasing concerns of the shipping insurance industry who, unlike the firms underwriting ground based security in Iraq, had a clear idea from the outset of the liabilities involved in piracy at sea and the measures required were these liabilities to be underwritten.

Rather than the 'anomic' experience of security contractors in Iraq (where no similar legal or regulatory structure was functioning), the experience of participants engaged in maritime security work was that of integration and conformity with an existing structure of objective control. The most obvious manifestation of this was the training required before a security operator was eligible to work on board ship. A new entrant needed to be in possession of a raft of qualifications beginning with a Standards of Training Certification and Watch Keeping for Seafarers (STCW) course. This included a module on behaviour aboard ship that sensitised trainees to working in a multicultural maritime environment. Additionally, applicants had to undergo specific training on first aid, fire fighting and sea survival and a separate Maritime Security Officer's (MSO) training course. All crew required an ENG1 seafarer's medical examination and security officers had to produce documents from their general practitioner attesting to the condition of their mental health (particularly in relation to depression, acute and post-traumatic stress reactions) and vouching that they had no history of substance abuse.

This existing structure of regulation had a significant effect on the experience of labour market entry. Janet Chan (1996 and 2004:333), in her study of police culture, used Sackman's four dimensions of cultural knowledge to examine the habitus of policing. Chan, citing Bourdieu, described the 'doxa' of policing as incorporating forms of 'axiomatic knowledge'. This included: 'dictionary knowledge' providing 'definitions and labels of persons, things and events encountered by police in the course of their work'; 'directory knowledge' that

¹⁵⁸ Resolution Msc.324(89).

which 'informs police officers about how operational work was routinely carried out'; and 'recipe knowledge' as 'the normative dimension of cultural knowledge that suggests what should or should not be done in specific situations'. The development of lower tier, operational guidance in maritime security created a change to the 'dictionary knowledge' of security at sea that had a direct effect on the 'recipe' knowledge' of maritime security practitioners. This structure of accountability was reflected in descriptions of the very controlled framework of response employed in the event of a security incident:

'So you're on a vessel, all your guys are on watch, the Officer on the watch or the AB¹⁵⁹ or you, yourself, spot something on the radar, or at sea - to start with a couple of miles away. Then you confirm it on the radar, you have a look at it, you can't PID¹⁶⁰ it or see ladders or weapons to start with. However, you've looked at your position, and you're not in fishing areas. So you've got three or four skiffs, you can see they're not fishermen. So you instantly in your own mind know that's slightly out of the normal, slightly strange. They could be just sat there together in the water, just bobbing around. What are the tell-tale signs? If you then see another vessel, which could be ten or twenty miles away from these skiffs, which could be the mother vessel that they will launch from. However, regardless of seeing the mother vessel or not, you've got three or four skiffs in the middle of the ocean, on their own, definitely not fishing even though you can't see anything positively, it makes you think that's not quite right.

My initial reactions to that would be to instantly get everybody inside who was working on deck, lock the ship down, stand the rest of the security team to¹⁶¹, get them to the bridge, inform the Master. With the Chief I would get confirmation that everybody is in the vessel. I wouldn't panic them all at this point, press the alarm and say get to the citadel. I would just ensure everybody is inside the vessel and the vessel is locked down. Then, with the Master and the Chief and my team would just keep eyes on the vessels that are out there. We'd probably split. You have two on the port side, two on the starboard side. As a Team Leader, you'd be in the middle, chatting to the Master, looking at the radar. If they come a little bit closer, so this could be up to a mile and a half away now, you can try various things. You can increase speed, slightly alter our course. If they start to follow us and increase speed themselves then there's a fair indication that actually they're looking at us. At that point, I would then say to the Chief

¹⁵⁹ Assistant Boatswain.

¹⁶⁰ PID, positively identify.

¹⁶¹ Stand-to, to prepare for action.

“is everybody locked down?”. He’s confirmed it. At this point we’d just say everybody get to the muster point. So if they’ve not gone to the citadel, they’d have gone maybe to the engine control room. So he will just say “yes, we’ve got twenty-five people on board, there’s five of you on the bridge, twenty-one are with me down here, everybody’s ready to go”. I’d say “fantastic, thank you. Just stay as you are”.

We’ve now altered course slightly, we’ve increased speed slightly and these skiffs are following us. So at this point, it could be down to a mile. I’d be saying to the guys “get geared up”. At this point we’d put on helmets, body armour, get our individual weapons, get our grab bag. We’re not loaded at this point. So basically we’re going through this traffic light system, the escalation. So that, if you like, would be amber. We’re getting ourselves prepared for [the use-of-force].

Those skiffs, now a mile away and have split, two starboard – starboards on the right side – two port. They get to four, five hundred metres. We can now see weapons, we can now see ladders. At that point, probably a thousand metres away, they’re still coming towards us, I’d give the order to load. That means physically putting the magazine into the weapon, that’s not made-ready, (made-ready means that’s the weapon cocked). So we’ve gone from what’s called a ‘weapons hold’ state to a weapons ‘semi-free’. I haven’t given the order to fire just yet. So we see weapons, we see ladders, we see four, five guys in each of them. They’re still following us. Bear in mind we’re in a bridge a hundred a fifty foot off the water, they’re down on the water. Unless they physically show intent to endanger the vessel, endanger life, you can’t just start shooting because of the rules of use-of-force. However, if you’ve seen the equipment and it’s getting to four, five hundred metres away, you could do a show-of-force; show them the weapons. If they’re testing to see if there is security on-board they now physically can see that you have armed security. You’ve showed the weapons. You could, if they’re still coming towards you at that point, fire flares. That is what we used to do. To be honest, once you’ve shown someone your weapon and they’re still coming the next thing they’re going to do is probably open fire. But if they don’t and they’re still coming towards you, you fire warning shots to the front and the stern of that vessel.

Again, all this is recorded. The minute someone stands up in the skiff, points a weapon at the ship it’s recorded. By this time I’ve given the command “weapons free” and the lads have made ready. So if it’s something I can’t see (although I can still hear it), if team member A says “he’s got the weapon in his arm, he’s pointing at the vessel” then obviously he can take immediate action, which will be to use lethal force, but only to that individual with a weapon pointing at the ship. Not, as you’ve probably

seen on YouTube, with the different American companies where they've just totally riddled up skiffs and killed everybody. You could say they're just pirates but it's immaterial, you still have to go through the escalation of force, because the safety of lives at sea means you just can't willy-nilly do what you want. So ultimately someone's aimed a weapon at the vessel, whether they've discharged their firearm or not, the minute it's pointed then you can take immediate action. And that's the point where you would discharge your firearm. All this process could all take a couple of hours.' (David)

In this example accountability for use-of-force decisions was clearly articulated. The discharge of a firearm was an individual responsibility, but procedures permitted the Ship's Master to request that force not be used except in circumstances where there was a direct threat to the life of security officers; thus establishing a form of 'checks and balances' over use-of-force decisions. These standards were reflected in documentation that was jointly promulgated by commercial security sector industry organisations¹⁶², transnational maritime organisations, national 'flag' authorities, security companies and client maritime organisations.

The Best Management Practice of the IMO formed the basis for a framework of escalation that precluded the type of ambiguity that could provide space for transgression. However, the coherence of this system of control was in no small part a function of the physical environment of maritime operations. Unlike ground based security a threat to the ship would usually be identified a number of kilometres distant. Space and time was available to calibrate the threat and escalate the potential use-of-force. The ship's environment lent itself to the careful monitoring and logging of decisions; and the environment of surveillance (with CCTV throughout the bridge and covering other areas of the vessel, and dictaphones routinely used to record all communication during incidents) meant that there could be little expectation that mistakes or wrongdoing would go unaddressed. Thus threats at sea involved less uncertainty and immediacy than land based threats and required less devolved discretion. In turn, this created less space for the development of transgressive team cultures. These factors, coupled

¹⁶² SCEG, the Security in Complex Environments Group and ICoCA, International Code of Conduct Association.

with the physical constraint that security operations were restricted to the deck and bridge of the vessel they were protecting, limited potential for the 'creep' towards offensive security practices that participants experienced in Iraq.

The relative transparency of the maritime environment meant that the rationalisation of the maritime security market happened even faster than that of its land-based equivalent. Another participant, Kevin, described how on his first transit in 2008 he was earning UK£300 per day as a team member and, later, £325 as a team leader. However very quickly working conditions began to degrade. While initially teams would recover back to the UK between transits, it became commonplace for them to stay in a port of destination, sometimes for weeks to rendezvous with a second transit to a third location before returning to the UK. Simultaneously remuneration rates for armed transits began to drop as firms started to hire security officers, initially from other NATO nations, but soon after from a variety of other national militaries. Thus the cycle of high initial opportunity and reward was tempered as uncertainty and risk reduced. The relative relationship between economic capital (represented by the client organisations and insurers) and the military capital of western contractors changed. The relative simplicity of the use-of-force decision, and the actuarial evidence that ships carrying any armed presence (regardless of background or experience) were unlikely to be boarded, meant that terms and conditions deteriorated and labour market opportunities for former British service personnel contracted.

Discussion: The Rationalisation of Military Capital in Security Markets

In the narratives emerging from Iraq in particular we see the instrumentalisation of the reliable (former) military body to engage in conflict in ways manifestly similar to those exercised by the military. However, in transposing this action to the civilian field a contradiction became evident that sits at the centre of the private military security phenomenon; that the creation of individuals competent in violent action provided a subjective incentive for the enactment of this capability. In Bourdieusian terms, the value of the actor within the field could not be ascribed without opportunities for them to enact the capital they proposed for exchange. In the military the structural incentive towards the enactment of the

cultural capital of somatic military capacity (i.e. fighting capital) was that of increased status and credibility within an institution geared to the enactment of just such an aim (i.e. fighting). However, when the same incentives were transposed into the private security environment, where the perceived legitimacy of the violent act was not underpinned by the state's presumed monopoly over coercive force, the preparedness that military conditioning created to enact the embodied discipline of competence in violence, had more limited utility.

Security was constructed by participants as a field of activity more restricted in scope than warfare. Geographically this was certainly the case. Action by security actors removed in space or time from the object of their protection quickly ceased to be defensive in nature. Simultaneously, the creation of a secure environment was recognised in contemporary military doctrine as being a task of greater complexity and sophistication than conventional military operations; the condition of security being achieved by the potential, not the actual enactment of violent action (Dobbie, 1994). Thus the military capital of somatic expertise, with its associated highly masculine orientation towards the capable enactment of violence, had the potential to both enhance and jeopardise the aim of achieving security.

This was, in many respects unsurprising. The aim of conventional military action was less to create security for the polity on whose behalf the military acted, than to create insecurity for the polity against whom they were set. However, this gave rise to a paradox within military culture where competence in the creation of insecurity was seen to be foundational (rather than antithetical) to competence in the creation of security. The emotional incentives created by the inculcation, through training, of competence in aggressive offensive action that created insecurity to the enemy 'other' manifested as displays hyper-invested violence that damaged the strategic aim of creating and sustaining secure environments. These displays of poorly aligned and non-adaptive behaviour (Garland, 2001) were most prevalent in circumstances where security contractors worked with relative autonomy, limited objective control and in small teams that re-created the conditions of the military sub-unit. For some, these small private security sub-units provided a vehicle for highly masculine action-oriented behaviours that

were enacted to compensate for unfulfilled personal potential or stymied self-actualisation. This hyper-invested deviance was sustainable in private security markets through the collective misrecognition (Bourdieu, 1977) of the utility of 'fighting capital' to the creation of security.

Brought together we can see how these dynamics played out when changes in geopolitics created new potential operating space for private military security companies in Iraq. In the initial phase, characterised by considerable uncertainty and acute but un-calibrated consciousness of risk, client organisations (possessing economic capital) created over-demand for the somatic military capital of competence in the enactment of force (i.e. fighting capital). This placed premium on the military capital available to all service people (conventional and Special Forces) to a greater or lesser extent, but with an emphasis on the highly masculinised military habitus of combat units. The emotional and cognitive disposition of this habitus was seen to be a guarantee of 'reliability' under circumstances of physical threat, and became a capital that could be exchanged in the market. This created employment opportunities that attracted former service people from conventional military units into an industry to which they had not previously had access. The concentration of (largely) men with conventional military experience into teams where they were directly engaged in the application of violent force replicated the circumstances of the military sub-unit. This created a situation where (potentially idealised) combat unit cultures were reproduced in an environment where normative institutional military culture no longer provided an anchor against which divergent behaviours would strain. This, coupled with low levels of supervision, a socially disorganised operating environment and changing cultural and political expectations as to role, increased the potential for transgressive behaviour.

It was here that the divergence between the Iraq and maritime security experience became evident. In Iraq the creation of military style security sub-units was coupled with the rapid and unregulated proliferation of new security companies and, for a time, the potential of ever increasing financial reward. The result was itinerant behaviour that assisted wrongdoers in evading formal and informal social control. The nature of the insurgency that followed the 2003 invasion

further exacerbated these problems. Here the practices of ground based unconventional warfare and the geography of the operating environment led to teams making defining decisions about the use of force in isolated circumstances with little prospect of oversight or accountability. By contrast the highly controlled maritime environment, replete with an existing structure of encompassing accountability and objective control, and restricted by the geography of a ship at sea, gave rise to far less potential for socially harmful behaviour.

In both cases, as the initial phase of uncertainty matured into a framework of understanding, the market for private security rationalised. The field relationship between the military capital of security actors and economic capital of clients changed. In Iraq incidents like the Danny Fitzsimons killings (Daily Mail Foreign Service, 2009) and the shooting of unarmed civilians in Nisour Square by employees of the US firm Blackwater (Krahmann, 2017), highlighted the corporate reputational liability associated with the employment of western private security companies. This dovetailed with societal disapproval of the new 'mercenary' phenomena. More significantly, as the nature of the risks from the insurgency became clear the true exchange value of basic somatic military capability (fighting capital) was re-calibrated. Poorly managed it could be a liability as well as a benefit and was therefore most useful when it was threatened but not employed. The acceptance of this stance led to the realisation by both clients and insurers that most security tasks did not require the exclusive use of expensive western expatriates.

Against this evidence the economic capital of client organisations re-asserted dominance in the field. Third country national employment became economically (and politically) more desirable and, critically, was sanctioned by insurers. Western security contractors came under wage pressure and only specialists who could demonstrate aptitude for commercial security (i.e. who had a wider base of capital, either military or commercial) could maintain their field position. Lesser skilled practitioners, those without a well formed commercial security habitus, or without other forms of specialist military expertise, began to find market access restricted and remuneration reduced. Simultaneously, the reduction in the

premium placed on 'fighting capital' saw a change to the way security contractors were deployed. Fewer western expats¹⁶³ were employed working together in teams and those that remained in Iraq moved back to more traditional coordinating and consultancy roles. In turn incidents of transgression by western contractors began to reduce.

A similar dynamic was evident in the maritime market, although here greater transparency and accountability (and a direct link to more developed insurance practices) ensured that the transition to employment of 'third country nationals' happened with even greater speed than in Iraq. Fundamentally, the cultural capital of competence in the direct application of force was found to have more limited utility across the longer term than perceptions in the initial phase of crisis had given rise to believe. Thus, the relationship of the various forms of capital at work in the field rationalised. Clients with economic capital quickly identified where a (purportedly) reliable capacity to apply force under complex and arduous circumstance was really required, assessed the extent to which this capacity was associated with specific experience (i.e. elite western military), and took a position on the extent to which access to this capital justified the economic premium.

In turn there was some evidence that, in the middle-market of security in the Middle East, this created pressure for private military security firms to review their hiring practices and adopt a more nuanced position on utility of military experience. Roger observed that his company now actively sought employees who demonstrated the ability to distance themselves from the culture of their former military service:

'We want an 'ordinary person'; the average program manager or customer relations manager might be a young Captain coming out of the forces; but the changes are they've had a university education before the forces. They will be quite well educated and actually they are probably, generationally, coming with a more open mind. They may have left the military because they may have thought that that was not the 'way ahead' for them. In other words, already, mentally they are on a different track. When you look at

¹⁶³ The number of non-US and Iraqi nationals engaged in private security contracting fell from a high of 14,477 in the third quarter of 2009 to 2,262 in the first quarter of 2014 (Peters, Schwartz and Kapp, 2017:10-11) based on CENTCOM data.

the 'steeped' military person who has done 20 years, whether he is an officer or an other-rank, the jargon, the approach, the camaraderie, it is not consistent with our needs. In terms of attitude, the longer they have spent in the military the less suited they are. Increasingly our projects will be run by civilians. They will have a deputy who has the pure security knowledge.' (Roger)

Thus some security organisations had begun to address the potential negative impact of un-reconstructed (and un-reconstructable) military identity. These companies had come to the realisation that a more 'Janowitzian' alignment between the behaviour of the security actor and the values of the referent society was necessary for commercial reasons and, ultimately, to ensure the perpetuation of the sector as a viable field of activity. However, this progress was not universal and there remained some areas of the field where this reformatory impetus was absent. It is to these 'fringes' of the private military security field to which I now turn.

Chapter 7 International Fringe: Consultants and ‘Mercenaries’

Analysing the narratives of my participants it seemed clear that the commodification of military expertise had the potential to create circumstances of considerable ambiguity and risk, the prime source of which was the unfettered propensity for security practitioners to create insecurity rather than security through a predisposition towards aggressive, offensive modes of behaviour. There was also evidence that exposure to the logic of the market (i.e. the exchange of capital) and developing structures of governance had some effect in restricting this propensity. However, the landscape of private military security was not uniform. There were certain areas of the field which operated with limited transparency and in which ethical and legal ambiguity remained commonplace. Thus, the ethical landscape for field participants was not defined solely by the decisions made in an operational environment between ‘professional’ and ‘unprofessional’ practices. Practitioners also made choices about the type of private security actor they wished to become, and the type of contract or employment that they were prepared to undertake. These choices defined their position in the field of private military security and the trajectory of their career. Kate described her experience of contact with these more ambiguous sub-fields, and the choices she made:

“There was a coup in Equatorial Guinea¹⁶⁴. People I knew were asked to take part in that and, you know, do bits and pieces. In Papua New Guinea¹⁶⁵ a couple of technical people I know were asked to help on the Coup there with Tim Spicer¹⁶⁶. He subsequently went out there and got arrested so they were glad they didn’t do it. I made the decision when I left [the Army] that I will only work this side of the law. I won’t do illegal stuff, so anything that is vaguely illegal I won’t do. I just turn it down [and say] “thanks for asking”. In those couple of years after you leave people try and test the water to see if you will do it or not. Everybody knows who is leaving and the people who do that type of work, they want to know who will do it and who won’t. If you do one job, if you ever became known as doing that type of job, you would never be used by the good people. I just made the decision that I was never going to do that and I never have. There is an

¹⁶⁴ The ‘Wonga Coup’ of 2004 (Carmola, 2010:48).

¹⁶⁵ The planned involvement of Sandline International in Papua New Guinea in 1997 (Shearer, 1998:36).

¹⁶⁶ See Spicer (2000).

informal divide between the companies that work ethically and those that don't. The coup end of the market is the mercenary end. The other end is the illegal stuff around surveillance, around breaking into people's houses around digital security, what's legal and what isn't, hacking and stuff.' (Kate)

Kate and other participants identified two 'fringe' areas of the military private security field. It was in these areas that my interviewees considered the greatest potential for both wrongdoing and social harm to exist. One of these sub-fields was well publicised and recognisable, the international fringe of 'mercenary' activity (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011; Musah and Fayemi, 2000; Steinhoff, 2008; Baker, 2008; Percy, 2007). The second fringe area was the less visible world of the (predominantly domestic) covert surveillance industry. In this chapter I address the international fringe of private 'mercenary' activity and military training before turning in the next chapter to covert surveillance.

Coups, Conflict and Consultancy

The fringe area of international 'mercenary' activity is one of the more debated facets of the contemporary private security phenomenon. The field is characterised by definitional disputes (both scholarly and practical) over the exact nature of 'mercenary' activity and the ethical/empirical basis for the application of the generally pejorative moniker (see the dispute between Brookes and Fainaru in Carmola, 2010:13). Victor, a former Special Forces NCO, confirmed that a fringe area of activity was accessible to those with the necessary experience and contacts where more aggressive forms of military activity were practiced for profit. He considered that a fairly clear ethical distinction existed between this and the routine activity of the Circuit and its early corporate successors for whom he had conducted the majority of his own work:

'If I was to go next door now and say to [my wife] right if you get some young lad who's been in the Army for let's say 5 years and, he was offered a job working as a security advisor or providing security somewhere, on some oil installation or something, I'm very confident that she would say yeah that's OK. Now, what if that young lad was given ammunition, an assault rifle, grenades and him and 50 or 60 other people supported by sniper rifles, 50 calibre machineguns, you know, personal anti-tank weapons and mortars and they were to go and [conduct a coup] would you

think that's acceptable? I'm sure she'd say no, that's bloody mercenary, you know and they shouldn't do that.' (Victor in Thornbury 2011)

Yet, in the explanation above Victor provided evidence of the complexity of the 'mercenary' construction even among industry participants. His own distinction between legitimate and illegitimate work was a complex amalgam. It contained elements of Carmola's (2010) distinction between illegitimate 'mercenary' type activity and more legitimate security activity as a function of the 'purpose' of the activity conducted; whether the security action in question 'aims to change the status quo or not' (Carmola, 2010:19). However, Victor's interpretation also encompassed a distinction between 'offensive and defensive' actions (Percy 2014), the nature of the client contracting the military activity (Kinsey, 2006), and the constitution of its organisation (ad-hoc or working within a recognised structure of power, Petersohn, 2014). Thus, in a security field encompassing both 'business suited security consultants' and 'combat troops in army fatigues'¹⁶⁷ (Mandal 2002:94 in Carmola 2010:18-19) the 'look and feel' of a security organisation had an impact on the extent to which it was considered 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' (Spearin 2007:545); the titles and nomenclature of the business world potentially serving to neutralize the societal disapproval associated with more 'battlefield' oriented functions (Percy, 2007b and 2016).

On examination, the international 'fringe' of private military security was not a clearly defined space determined by definitive boundaries between normative and transgressive legal and ethical practices. While the general construction of 'legitimate' activity (such as training and consultancy) and 'illegitimate' activity (such as offensive operations, coups and revolutions) did exist the distinction between ethical and unethical activity was, in practice, difficult to discern. Ostensibly 'legitimate' tasks, overtly sanctioned and supported by the UK government often blended into territory where private security firms were used as deniable instruments of national *realpolitik* in a manner that made the distinction between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' forms of work difficult to determine.

¹⁶⁷ See also Singer (2003 on MPRI for a good example of a company that simultaneously encompassed both of these functions and identities.

Kate, like Victor, proposed an emphatic commitment only to conduct 'legal' security work. However, she also observed that even commercially procured offensive military activity could not in all cases be considered wholly unethical. She gave as an example Executive Outcome's engagement in the conflict in Sierra Leone in the 1990s (Kinsey 2006:62). While the use of South African mercenaries to conduct counterinsurgency operations fitted the 'mercenary' construction, the mission was sanctioned and supported by a number of western governments and afforded the legitimate government of Sierra Leone some success in confronting RUF¹⁶⁸ rebels. Thus, while its aesthetic and organisation was 'mercenary' its outcome was considered legitimate by some practitioners.

On reflection, Kate proposed that the distinction between legitimate training and consultancy work, and illegal mercenary activity had become more indistinct with the demise of firms like Executive Outcomes and Sandline¹⁶⁹ whose overt engagement in offensive military operations established a more visible dividing line (in public opinion at least) between 'mercenary style' private military companies and those oriented to defensive protective security. Now a host of companies who ostensibly signed up to the values of Montreux and the ICoC, engaged in activity, often with state connivance, that skirted or crossed the line into offensive operations. Through this more offensive, combat oriented activity was melded and conflated with the ostensibly more legitimate sphere of training support, a field more commonly associated with state sponsored security sector reform (Kinsey, 2005; 2006 and 2016; Avant and de Nevers, 2011) and constructed in much official discourse as a 'non-combat' function (Percy, 2007a; White, 2018).

Military Operations in Africa

One participant who had been engaged in contracted military work that was definitively offensive in nature and would fit the 'mercenary' stereotype was Pete. Pete's British military service was in the RAF Regiment in the 1970s. His first

¹⁶⁸ Revolutionary United Front

¹⁶⁹ Executive Outcomes ceased trading in 1997 following the company's unsuccessful engagement in Papua New Guinea in 1996. The company was contracted to Sandline International Ltd, who themselves ceased trading in 2004, following criticism by the UK Parliament Foreign Affairs Select Committee in relation to their involvement in Sierra Leone (Kinsey, 2006:70).

exposure to an operational military environment was in Doha protecting Salalah airfield during the secret conflict in Oman (Hughes, 2009). Like many participants he enjoyed the no-nonsense pragmatism of operational service, but was frustrated by the institutionalised routine of service life on his return to the UK. For Pete, the self-actualisation of soldiering in an operational conflict environment became a driving motivation. He achieved this by volunteering for service in the then Rhodesian military, which, at that time, was engaged in active counter-insurgency against ZANU PF guerrillas.

‘At the time, this would be ’76, ’77, there was a lot of civil unrest, civil war going on in Southern Africa and it was making the news and there was quite a lot of coverage on the TV of Rhodesia and problems in South Africa and Angola which caught my eye. By coincidence there were recruiting pamphlets that were floating around our unit, our squadron, to join the Rhodesian forces. At the time that was illegal because Rhodesia had announced UDI in 1965, which was the Unilateral Declaration of Independence against the Crown, so if you were a serving member of the British Forces it was deemed illegal to have any correspondence with the Iain Smith government in relation to serving them. However, saying that, certain members of our unit did write off to see what the situation was and basically they were offered positions in their military if you could prove that you had previous service and you were medically fit.’ (Pete)

Pete left the RAF Regiment and paid for passage to Rhodesia where he enlisted in a special operations unit. A combat injury and the culmination of the bush war ended his service in Rhodesia, but Pete, like many others, enlisted in the South African Defence Force where he served in their Special Forces until the mid 1980s. Together with a number of former Rhodesian military colleagues he then transitioned from the military into the commercial security sector in South Africa where he conducted a number of roles involving close protection and static manned guarding. In the early 1990s he returned to the United Kingdom and, through military contacts, found employment in ‘the Circuit’ protecting residential estates in the UK for high-net-worth Middle Eastern families. Soon Pete was conducting regular close protection work in both the United Kingdom and abroad.

Pete was well placed to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the instigation of the Global War on Terror and the invasion of Iraq. His 'credible'¹⁷⁰ military background and commercial experience, as well as his network of contacts, ensured he was at the front end of private security engagement in both Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan he coordinated security for major financial institutions engaged in the re-establishment of functioning banking and currency. Shortly thereafter he moved into employment in Iraq, conducting armed protective security for senior military commanders in the Coalition Provisional Authority's Organisation for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). In this role Pete was drawn into work in the ambiguous ground created by the Head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, Paul Bremer, whose policy was that private security be engaged directly in the maintenance of law and order. Pete observed that during that period 'basically we acted as a military police unit, which was a bit surreal'.

Pete continued to work in Iraq for a number of years. However, when remuneration and working conditions began to deteriorate he returned to England and worked on a series of security contracts for British 'risk management' companies in UK, Pakistan, Congo, Nigeria, Eastern Europe, Sierra Leone and Yemen. It was during this period that he was offered the opportunity of work in Africa with a more directly military orientation.

'I took up another position in Nigeria through contacts I knew from my Africa days. It was a training/operational job in the Nigerian military which was a three-month contract and the job was completed before the recent elections. In fact it had to be completed before the elections took place. It was meant to be kept quiet. However, the Directors of that company decided to publish some articles on the web about what went on, which really upset the client and the Nigerian government.

I wouldn't normally go and do this type of work okay. However, saying that [the security company] did the job. But it wasn't run very well in the sense that... really I know it's a sort of 'private' military type of work, but you've still got to run it like a [military] company. The people who were running it were Special Forces type people that don't know how to run an

¹⁷⁰ Pete was described in these terms by other participants. In this context the 'credible operator' was one who had a track record of active combat experience in which they have demonstrated professional competence.

infantry company, they haven't got the experience of doing that. They've probably got the experience of working in small teams. The job was actually forming up a unit, a strike-force, and going into operation with them against Boko Haram. So the job was done but it wasn't done very well. We did lose some people and that should have been avoided. We shouldn't have done what we did, so it was badly led in that sense.' (Pete)

The contract Pete became involved with was between a commercial mineral extraction company based in Nigeria and a security company led by former South African soldiers from the Apartheid era (Barlow, 2016 and Varin, 2018). The terms of the contract required that the security company select and constitute a small military force of commercially hired former soldiers (predominantly) from South Africa, but also including a number of ex-British servicemen. These soldiers were then to provide training to elements of the Nigerian military before accompanying them in a coordinated assault on Boko Haram insurgents. This involved direct engagement in combat operations alongside Nigerian Army soldiers on completion of their training. Pete described the process of recruitment for him and others involved in the operation:

'It wasn't something I would normally do. But I knew the client. He told me that, "a couple of South African guys are here in London" [looking to recruit for the operation]. If I'd have known what was going to happen I wouldn't have gone, without a doubt I wouldn't have gone on it, but I did. And I'm glad I went in a way because I've seen how they performed. There's nothing wrong with the guys in the field, but the way the whole thing was organised and run was bad.

I know how the South Africans [were recruited] because they were all connected. They've got their own 'Circuit'. I did know one, the guy that got killed¹⁷¹, he was on the ORHA¹⁷² job in Iraq. He was one of the close protection guys. Anyway, as for the British guys, some of them were contacted because they had worked in Sierra Leone. I was in Sierra Leone so I was one of them, I stayed with an ex EO¹⁷³ guy who'd lived in Sierra Leone for fifteen years. He stayed on there after the [Executive Outcomes operation] and he got a normal... well he got a job on the port checking containers and things like that, it was an office job. We used to go to

¹⁷¹ See The Citizen (2015), 'SA Military Contractor Killed in Nigeria'

¹⁷² OHRA, Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq

¹⁷³ EO, Executive Outcomes.

IMATT's¹⁷⁴ for functions, we used their gym, and we used to go on the range with them and shoot. We were civilians but they'd invite us down there on the range, so they we kept in contact with them. When they left the Army, which was just recently (I think they left the army within the last twelve months), the guy I stayed with brought them into [the operation]. The other [British] guys, I don't know, because I didn't know them personally. However, one or two of them had worked in Sierra Leone after I'd left there. I think another guy came in through some South African contact. But some of them told me that they didn't have SIA¹⁷⁵ licenses, they couldn't get work on the circuit in the UK, which I couldn't understand. Even these WO2¹⁷⁶ instructors from Scottish regiments couldn't get work. They could only get the odd job with G4S¹⁷⁷ for the Olympics or something like that. Some had security licenses some didn't. Some couldn't have licenses because, I think they had some previous criminal convictions, which to me didn't really make a lot of sense - because I think they were stuff that maybe happened in Germany, something that happened in their Army days. You've served your time you know what's that all about.' (Pete)

The recruitment of former soldiers for the contract was a networked exercise that crossed between two 'fields', the South African private military 'Circuit', involving actors formally connected to the private military firm Executive Outcomes (EO) and groups of former British military personnel who had established contact with the South African field often through service in British training and advisory teams in Sierra Leone. For some of these men regulation of the UK security industry following the Private Security Industries Act of 2001, and the barring of individuals from employment in the sector if they had a record of even minor violent offenses (not unusual in military service), meant that they were unable to gain conventional employment when their service had ended. The unregulated international field therefore became an attractive option when faced with increasingly restrictive employment practices at home.

The initial phase of the contract involved a stringent physical selection that replicated Special Forces pre-mission preparation. Here the group of potential

¹⁷⁴ IMATT, International Military Advisory and Training Team, the main British military presence in Sierra Leone following the British intervention in Operation Palliser in May 2000.

¹⁷⁵ SIA, UK Security Industries Authority.

¹⁷⁶ WO2, Warrant Officer Class Two, A senior NCO responsible for a company or squadron of soldiers.

¹⁷⁷ G4S, Group 4 Security, a multinational private security company.

participants in the operation was whittled down from approximately 75 to 25¹⁷⁸.

Pete completed this selection, but observed:

‘What I’m saying is, yes it might suit some of the younger Paras¹⁷⁹ that are eager, but if you’ve worked in the commercial field, private sector for years like I have you don’t want to be going and doing what I’ve just done really. You don’t want to be shouted out and run around. I was at Maiduguri Airport seven years previously when it was open, it was an international airport now its closed down, and no way did I think we’d be doing PT on the bloody apron there. Physically it didn’t bother me because I could do it. I’m not as fit as a thirty year old, but whatever they threw up - I could do. But what really got me is that the guys they put in command were guys that couldn’t do it. They had bad knees and they were old boys, the old boars from ‘their’ days, twenty years, thirty years ago, and they ended up being team leaders. They should have used these Brit guys really, the WO2s who had been in Sierra Leone training with the Sierra Leone Army. I don’t want to mention names but they had experienced guys there.’ (Pete)

Pete questioned the organisation of the operation by the South African senior management who, he considered, lacked both up to date combat experience and adequate knowledge of conventional military operations. In his opinion the Directors of the South African company running the operation should have adopted positions managing commerce and logistics, and allowed operational command to be disseminated to younger British and South African staff with more recent experience of combat and training in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone. He observed, ‘The guy who was company commander was seventy two years of age and basically he’s lost it, lost the way of doing it, so he should never have been in there or involved in that side’. The older South African staff, senior within the contracting company, attempted to re-create the rules bound environment of the Apartheid era military (McAleese, 2011). This approach sat uneasily with Pete, but also with the younger generation of ex-servicemen who were used to less

¹⁷⁸ Another interviewee stated that one ex-soldier recruited to the operation died as a result of heatstroke during this phase of the contract.

¹⁷⁹ Paratroopers

hierarchical behaviour on operations: “These guys were 20 years ago and it doesn’t work like that anymore, it was on the bus of the bus¹⁸⁰”.

This lack of cultural adaptability felt jarring to Pete. It was also reflected in relations with the Nigerian soldiers that the company had been contracted to train:

‘It’s like going back into the military but it isn’t the military because you’re still being told you’re contractors. But if you don’t meet the level you’re out of the whole thing. I would never say I was fearful of anyone in there, but they sort of tried to run it a bit on fear. They didn’t run it properly with their logistics and stuff, and some of the South Africans still thought they were back in South Africa in the old days of Apartheid. So that [became difficult] when the Nigerians complained. It wasn’t mutiny, but at one stage it wasn’t far off because they [The older white South African instructors] were being abusive towards them. Most of these guys hadn’t worked in Nigeria before. I’d worked in Nigeria, I know exactly how the Nigerians operate, they will never get equipment quickly, it doesn’t matter even if it’s the President asking, they’ll still hold the helicopters up in customs and this, that and the other. So you’ve got to go with the flow and try and save time; but they were under a bit of a time pressure to get these operations done.’ (Pete)

As the operation progressed frailties in the South African management’s understanding of large scale conventional military combat operations began to emerge:

‘They were still doing 1960s tactics where they should have listened to the British guys, the Paras and guys that we had. [The South African senior management] were under the impression that the Afghan thing was just protective security. Some of these South Africans, I mean the old school, thought it was just running around in pickup trucks doing security. They didn’t understand that [the British] guys were fixing bayonets and getting stuck-in. That’s why, just the mentality I didn’t understand, I mean we all know Afghan was a war and there was restraints on the British Forces, but a lot of those guys got stuck-in and it was fighting hand-to-hand basically. So when you’ve got guys with that experience why don’t you take that on board? And at the end [the South African senior management] said sorry

¹⁸⁰ A colloquial phrase that refers to the military practice of inconveniencing soldiers, seemingly without cause.

we should have listened to some of you guys. It's a bit too late after it's all over.' (Pete)

Former members of South African Special Forces dominated the structure of the private military company Pete worked with and established themselves in key positions in the framework of operational command; while former British soldiers, despite their superior physical conditioning, recent combat experience in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone and greater knowledge of conventional military operations were subordinated to non-command roles. Thus, within a commercial environment the symbolic capital of the South Africans' Special Forces service and their later involvement with Executive Outcomes, enabled these actors to retain dominance over the conduct of an operation that may better have been run by members of the British contingent, with their superior 'fighting capital' and more contemporary experience of conventional war-fighting operations. This hierarchy of military elitism led to a Bourdieusian 'misrecognition' of capital (Moore, 2012:101) that, in Pete's opinion, cost lives even though the operation achieved its aim:

'It did work in the end, it worked¹⁸¹. They did what they did, they achieved what they should have done. The Nigerian Army, its got no leadership and no logistics as such. It's got billions in money that has apparently been thrown at it, but where's that gone? I don't know¹⁸². Everything was done so quickly we didn't have the right equipment. We had some equipment but it came in very late so we were mucking around with weapons that were forty years old. We didn't have the vehicles and helicopters and all that [until very late]. But we came in and started a momentum for the Nigerians to do it. And I think that's what [was needed]. It was really leading from the front to get them motivated to do it... I wouldn't say motivated but organised.'(Pete)

In this account Pete gives weight to the claims of private military industry actors (Brooks, 2000b; Brooks and Wright 2007; Baker and Pattison, 2012) that, private companies can achieve, with greater efficiency and more limited expenditure, things that conventional military forces (with their extended procurement and planning cycles and extensive logistical requirements) would struggle to achieve.

¹⁸¹ See Barlow, 2016 and Mkandla (2017) on the relative success of the operation.

¹⁸² See also Varin, 2018:149

Pete's account displayed something of the racialised construction of expertise observed by Chisholm (2014a), but this was balanced by the assertion that, operationally, cultural differences had to be accommodated rather than suppressed or challenged. Beyond this, the characteristic racism of post-colonial era mercenary operations in Africa (Singer 2003:37) was evident in the behaviour of the South African contingent that Pete worked with. Pete also cites poor leadership and disorganised logistics, although a lack of fighting spirit does not appear to have been evident (Carmola, 2010:12). Indeed, if anything, this episode illustrates the tension that exists when an aging demographic of very 'invested' former elite soldiers engage in the type of activity that, with discretion, might have been more aptly accomplished by younger veterans with more contemporary operational experience and cultural orientation.

Thinking about his decision to undertake the contract Pete reflected on the political aspects of the operation:

'If you think about why they brought in a [private] company, you come back to: why isn't the British government doing more in these sort of places, especially a former colony? I don't quite understand it. I think the Americans would have [sorted it out]. But the Americans would require boots on the ground and to have a permanent base there to do that sort of thing, and the Nigerians won't allow that¹⁸³. They don't want that because once you get the Americans in its very hard to get them out. However, the British do a lot of talking and indirectly... indirectly I would say that the Americans and British are maybe the cause of some of that issue that are going on [in Northern Nigeria]. For the Nigerian part, it was something that was probably stoked by some of the governors up there [in Northern Nigeria] and got out of control and then they [Boko Haram] got funding from elsewhere and the whole thing became quite a big threat. But for five years they knew about these guys [Boko Haram] and they should have done something about it. It's politics again.'(Pete)

In Pete's view the genesis of the conflict in Northern Nigeria could be attributed to both local Nigerian politics and the influence of western powers in the region. As such, the contract operation he worked on was conducted in the ambiguous middle ground between official public policy and less transparent national

¹⁸³ Varin, 2018:148 provides reasons why both the US and the UK may have been constrained in their support.

interest; the private military sector providing options for the enactment of policies that would be politically impossible to achieve if they were to be realised using state military forces. Ultimately Pete's decision to engage in commercially contracted combat operations was less about political than personal considerations:

'For me it served a purpose, it gave me three months good pay. That type of work really... I shouldn't have gotten involved in the operations side at my age. Saying that, there were guys older than me. But the whole idea of it... I think everyone's got a conscience or you've got a moral [position]; but sometimes you do things on adrenaline and the whole heat of the moment, you do something, which is totally abnormal. So I don't know, it's hard to say, it's hard to actually define and say I wouldn't do this and I wouldn't do that, because you just don't know until it happens. But I would personally not go back and do what I did there; and it's not because I'm too old to do the sort of thing they wanted us to do. There were a lot of people out there too old to do it, and we shouldn't have been doing it; I shouldn't have been doing it. I've done most things and worked and had a lot of really well paid jobs, like the Yemen job, I worked six months a year and I earned a hundred thousand pound a year, so why did I go and do that? Well there was a bit of an adrenaline buzz involved and I knew [the client]. Without that I wouldn't have gone and done it and would I do it again? No not that same thing.' (Pete)

Thus Pete, a professional soldier and security practitioner, with experience of a number of conflicts, expressed ambivalence about working on offensive military operations conducted in the commercial sphere. These misgivings stemmed from both the conduct of the operation and a general sense that this, more offensive type of activity, should really have been the preserve of state actors. Despite this, the excitement and emotional fulfilment of combat operations, the practical necessity of employment and his affiliation with other participants involved in the operation was enough to persuade him to take part.

Culture and Combat on the Fringe

Pete's description of the Nigerian operation has some shades of the 'Wild Geese'¹⁸⁴, and a direct link to the operations of Executive Outcomes in the 1990s.

¹⁸⁴ Fredrick Forsyth's novel about mercenary operations in Africa in the 1970s made into a film released in 1978 starring Richard Burton (McLaglan, 1978).

But was the offensive operation in which Pete took part the ‘last hurrah’ of a cohort of old mercenaries, an embarrassing throwback to bad old days of the post Apartheid African mercenary boom? Pete’s ambivalence about the operation was, at least in part generational. Older participants (Pete and Victor were in their mid 60s at the time of interview) were far less likely to accept offensive military operations as a legitimate role for private companies. While most considered the training of foreign militaries to be an acceptable commercial role, the strongly expressed view was that a ‘line was crossed’ if the trainer accompanied troops into operations, and a further line crossed if the private actor engaged in combat activity themselves.

Younger participants (those between 33 and 47 years old at the time of interview) took a different view. They saw the use of force by private security actors as a ‘normal’ activity for the industry. Kate, considered that the type of operation in which Pete had been involved was now both acceptable and fairly routine, ‘Would you be armed and go in with them¹⁸⁵? Yes you would nowadays; that’s quite normal’ (Kate). For her the demarcation between ethical and unethical, reputable and disreputable was different:

‘Doing a training team job, although there are boots on the ground, that is not mercenary. There are loads of contracts like that. In my head that still sits within the legitimate side of the house. As long as the deployment on the ground was to manage weakness in the Nigerian command structure, that still makes it legitimate. It’s a bit like what the military do in Kurdistan, a lot of them were deploying on the ground or a BATT Team¹⁸⁶. In the olden days you didn’t deploy [on active operations] whereas now I think you do. Just to keep control and, yes, you probably are armed. The difference in my head was the old companies, EOs and Sandlines they actually would get the contract to take-out the government. Also they weren’t using locals. So, for example, in Equatorial Guinea one side of the government paid for a team of mercenaries to get on a plane and fly 60 blokes to attack [a target]. They had a plan. They put in the advanced recce (who were all arrested) and then the other plane got stopped in Zimbabwe. They were all rehearsed all practiced back in South Africa and then they flew in to do the coup. Now that in my head is wrong. That is a mercenary job. You know, that is regime

¹⁸⁵ In this context ‘go in with them’ refers to engaging in combat with the unit the instructor has trained.

¹⁸⁶ A British Advisory and Training Team, a military mission to train foreign forces.

changing. That's not the same as putting training teams into countries where the [UK] government has sanctioned it. In some of the countries where we have worked, where we have put training teams in [the security company] check with the FCO and we never go in anywhere if it's not sanctioned. We put training teams in, yeah, we put a lot into Africa but it is always sanctioned by our government. We won't do it unless it is sanctioned. [The Nigerian operation] would have been sanctioned.' (Kate)

Attitudes towards the conduct of offensive operations were bifurcated. An older generation of security actors believed that, while the training of foreign government forces was a legitimate role for the private sector, the armed accompaniment of those trainees into combat operations rendered the private security actor a combatant and crossed the boundary between ethical and unethical conduct. For a younger generation of military private security practitioner the armed accompaniment of trainees into combat operations was seen as routine. The demarcation point between these two interpretations had two aspects: the role the security actor played in the offensive operation and the ratio of foreign consultants to local actors. With regard to the former, there was a distinction drawn between the oversight of local force command structures and the direct assumption of command by foreign security consultants. In the latter, there was a general consensus across all parties that the provision of teams comprised predominantly of foreign actors to carry out offensive military tasks independently (at a tactical level) was still unacceptable.

This division of opinion has its roots in the changing nature of state military engagement in training and advisory roles for local forces. During the Cold War era superpower confrontation was conducted strictly by proxy. Training and advisory missions would observe a strict divide between the training of local forces and engagement in the subsequent offensive operations that they conducted. In the post-Cold War era this division has not been so strictly observed. Kate mentioned British military support for the Kurds, but the same situation could be observed in Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed as the pieces of the 'shaken kaleidoscope' (Guardian, 2001b) of the Global War on Terror settled, forms of warfare that involved active cooperation in combat between local force actors and small groups of specialists from sponsoring western nations came

to be accepted in military doctrine (Boot, 2003:50). As such, we can see that as the doctrinal changes in 'stability support' operations developed during the humanitarian interventions in the 1990s have transferred into private sector practice, so have the more 'hands-on' post Global War on Terror practices in relation to training, advising and supporting local force actors.

This bifurcation was evident even in more mainstream area of the security field¹⁸⁷ and could not simply be attributed to the propensity of younger private security operators to greater laxity and more transgressive patterns of behaviour. Indeed some non-military interviewees' observations of the character of former Special Forces personnel entering the private security sphere from different generations of service gave a more nuanced picture:

'I do think that the modern Special Forces guy in contrast to guys that I used to work with in the eighties are different. These guys in the eighties, they sailed close to the wind. I think that now the individual they're looking for is a more thinking individual. These guys in the past, some of them were thugs, characters, but they were a different type of individual to the ones now. [The contemporary Special Forces soldiers] they've still got that adventurism, but it's more controlled.' (George)

Thus, older operators were perceived to be more liminal in their behaviours, more violent and more ambivalent in their adherence to rules and norms; but had a stronger sense of the traditional distinction between the role of state and non-state actors in the application of coercive force. Those with more contemporary Special Forces experience were perceived to be more measured and rational in their conduct, but demonstrated less concern over the direct application of violence by private companies. Thus, this fringe area of the private military security field had simultaneously become normatively more aggressive and (perhaps, as a result) culturally less transgressive.

This dynamic was reflected in Kate's experience of gender in this more 'combat oriented' area of the market. Working with a younger generation of private

¹⁸⁷ Gary, who had worked in both security and de-mining stated that it had now become commonplace for weapons to be carried by staff supervising de-mining teams. He noted that this type of practice had, until the advent of the War on Terror, been frowned upon as de-mining had been considered a humanitarian occupation.

security actor engaged in tasks routinely involving conflict, her experience did not bear the same hallmarks of extreme transgressive sexism as had her service as a Special Forces surveillance operator.

'Weirdly, the negative elements of military culture, in terms of being a woman were not carried over into private security. I have never had any issues at all in the private security world. Completely because there aren't that many of us out there. I'm not boasting, I have a reasonably good reputation and generally I am going in as a consultant. I am going in to look at [security] and make recommendations. If you look at my pedigree as a consultant, most people know what my background is before I get there. You know what it is like, they check you out. So I've never had an issue.'
(Kate)

Kate acknowledged that this was at least in part a function of the role that she now carried out. Consultancy provided her with greater agency and more power to determine her relationship with other practitioners:

'It is to do with being a consultant. I know it is different for females on a team. I know women CP operators but not within the hostile environment where they are armed. I don't know any women that work out in Iraq for example. There have been some, but I think they have suffered much more of what I saw in NI, the "whether you can shoot straight, whether you can carry...". I think you go back to that if you are at that low level; if you are on a team I think you would go immediately back to that world again. But if you're going in as a consultant or as an operations manager that goes away, because suddenly you are in charge and they can't argue with you so much.'
(Kate)

Where Kate was dealing with contractors engaged routinely in combat operations, and where her role retained both distance and authority, coupled with her relative novelty as a woman in the field, she did not pose the emasculating threat to these private military actors that she had to her Special Forces colleagues. While this may be a function of the fact that access to circumstances where violence could be enacted was not competed for to the same extent in environments like Iraq as it had been in Northern Ireland, the more 'loosely coupled' and less tightly institutional nature of the private provision of armed force provided Kate with a space where she could exercise her expertise without her gender being the source of challenge or restriction. While she remains a single example of this phenomenon, this

provides a useful reminder that the ‘masculinized and masculinizing’ (Eichler, 2015) effect of private security culture intersects with role and status in ways which are not uniform, with less evidence of social reproduction of ‘hyper-masculine’ cultures in the more autonomous parts of the industry (i.e. consultancy) and, more in the cultures of small operational teams.

Discussion: Commercial as the ‘New’ Covert Activity

While younger actors in the field appeared less prone to wilful transgression, they adopted a more aggressive normative position in relation to the direct application of violence by private actors. This appeared to both stem from, and contribute to, the contemporary latitude afforded private companies to engage in the conduct of offensive military operations. This latitude, while on one level empowering the private military security actor, was experienced by participants as creating profound ambiguities and complexities around the determination of acceptable and unacceptable propositions of employment. Kate observed that caution had to be exercised by private security practitioners in determining work in which national governments were using private companies accountably, and where the commissioning of a private entity was designed to avoid accountability:

[Government agencies] do that all the time; they use security companies when they don’t want their fingers burned. And I know that because I was due to do a job in [an African nation undergoing a process of post-conflict political change]. It was just before [a significant constitutional process] was going to happen, about 3 months before. [The contracting security company] called us in and said, “will you go and do a training task in [a rural location] up-country”. I think we were going to put three people in, me and two others, training the [country’s] intelligence services. I said, “well, wait a second is this sanctioned? Because if we get caught doing this training team we are going to wreck the peace process; wreck the [constitutional process] and the whole thing is going to go down the pan and war is going to break out again”. And they wouldn’t give us an answer about whether it was sanctioned or not.

The guy who was the project manager [for the security company] was an ex [UK government agency employee], so I knew damn well he had a line straight in, and I said to him: “right we’ll do the job but we want a written confirmation from the government that this is backed – we’re not doing it without that”. [The contracting security company] were a bit, “oh it doesn’t matter stop fretting about it”. And I said “Well you’re not the ones on the

ground who are going to get hung out to dry when [the government] turns around and say, ooh no that's nothing to do with us" because they were using a security company; because they wanted a cut-off. So actually, they were tasking through this bloke [the project manager]. He'd left [a UK government agency], he'd been out a few years and they were tasking [the security company he worked for] because they know that they would do it. Most other companies wouldn't have done it. It was a cut-out; if it went pear-shaped [the security company] would take it on the chin and the government would just deny it to the hilt. And that's why they would never put anything on paper to say they were tasking us. Anyway we turned it down.

I know [the work was] sanctioned [by the UK government]. But unless they are prepared to stick their neck out and say it's sanctioned I am not going out there. Because if we get caught, you know, high chance of getting caught, it isn't worth it. You know, I'm not getting paid enough to do this. So anyway we didn't do it and another company went and did it.

There have been another couple of examples where the British Government have tasked security companies to go and do their dirty work in countries where it's 'helpful' to have people trained. [It] Gives a capability without the media finding out, because they are always worried about that. So there are companies that will do that. All the companies that I have worked for will do it. I mean, I have gone off and done training tasks with other governments, but it's all sanctioned, we've got the letter saying we are being tasked by [the government]. So I would only do jobs that are sanctioned by our government because if you don't do that, and you get caught, the British Government will probably wash their hands of you; and suddenly you are training a mercenary force working against your government and I won't work against our government. You've got to be quite careful of that.' (Kate)

In Kate's narrative we can see how options for building military and security capacity through the use of private companies have become common practice for state organisations that, having lost capacity with the drawdown in standing military forces, are now accessing similar capacities through the private sector (Petersohn 2010; Taylor 2011). This was not a change in capacity alone. The hiring of private forces by state agencies has, throughout much of the post war period, been regarded politically as illegitimate under international law and engaged in by governments only under circumstances of great secrecy. The use of mercenaries has been constructed in public consciousness as the 'dirty wars' of

the 'secret state'; limited by both public disapproval and the absolute requirements of 'deniability' imposed by a backdrop of potential superpower conflict. As such, throughout the era of the Cold War this type of military support would have been carried out sparingly and on a covert (or even clandestine) basis (DeVine and Peters 2018; Cormac, 2018).

The emergence of new forms of commercially accessible military force that have developed since the end of the Cold War have provided states with opportunities to use military and security training of local actors as a key form of 'hybrid' warfare. The expansion of the corporate security field, and its legitimisation through both government contracting and state participation in regulatory assemblages (i.e. the Montreux Convention and the ICoC) means that nation states are able to use private actors to achieve manifestly similar aims to the state dominated covert operations of the Cold War; the legitimisation of 'corporate' style military training consultancy serving to ameliorate the public discomfort that accompanied Cold War era 'mercenary' activity. This was represented by a generational shift in attitudes towards the engagement of commercial entities in conflict, with younger actors less likely than their seniors to disapprove of the commercial contracting of offensive military capability. Indeed, among the younger cohort the distinction between ethical and unethical private military activity was seen to be less a function of the distinction between the private and state spheres, and more dependent on the identity and aesthetic of actors involved in the operation (i.e. the ratio of foreign to local actors, the extent to which recruitment was 'informal' or structured through a corporate entity). Ultimately the legitimacy of the state outsourcing its traditional monopoly of force had become less and less contentious; a trend that had provided state actors the ability to use militarised solutions in a greater range of circumstances than was possible during the Cold War and pre-Global War on Terror eras (Kinsey 2006:51-57).

In these narratives, Carmola's contention that private security is now routinely being used to obviate 'all but the most serpentine processes of oversight' (Carmola, 2010:15 on Scahill, 2007) was clearly borne out, while simultaneously the use of the same private military services was becoming less contentious. Further, the contracting by national governments of private companies directly

coordinating and conducting offensive operations by foreign military and security organisations legitimised the practice of the commercial contracting of armed force by the private sector. The vehicle used to deliver the offensive military operation conducted by Pete (i.e. the 'client' who hired and contracted the operation) was a private company not a state entity. It appears likely that this private initiative had substantial covert state backing and was sanctioned by both the British and Nigerian governments. However, the active engagement of government agencies in the conduct of offensive operations both for, and by, private companies cannot but influence the behaviour of private sector actors. Ultimately the covert commission of armed force by governments through private companies alters the possibilities open to the mercantile field and creates opportunities for the use of militarised forms of capital that would previously have fallen beyond the 'doxa' of the field of commerce, thus changing civilian practice to a more militarised norm. Interestingly, this dynamic was most in evidence not in the hotly debated field of the international 'mercenary' activity, but instead in the commercial market for specialist counter-terrorist style surveillance in the United Kingdom to which I turn in the next Chapter.

Chapter 8 Domestic Fringe: Covert Surveillance

While the social construction of the private military security field emphasised overseas work in high-risk areas as a core and defining concept, almost all participants had also conducted security work in the United Kingdom (see Appendix D). The most common form of domestic employment was that of close protection work (i.e. body-guarding), but a significant proportion of participants had conducted covert surveillance activity in the UK. While close protection has been a regulated activity since the establishment of the Private Security Industries Act in 2001 (UK Government, 2001), commercial covert surveillance had no such framework of governance. Interviewees identified covert surveillance as a ‘fringe’ area of the private military security field in which there was little transparency, and where the greatest potential for ethical ambiguity and illegality arose. It was in this sub-field of private security that some of the more far-reaching social implications of the proliferation of military capital were in evidence.

The Covert Surveillance Sub-Field

Covert surveillance is the deployment of a person, or group of people, to observe secretly another person, or group, to establish evidence of their conduct, lifestyle, associates or affiliations. This evidence may be used in a number of ways and for a variety of purposes, including in support of criminal and civil litigation, in the conduct or resolution of employment or commercial disputes, or as an element of a security assessment or investigation. Stuart described a ‘typical’ covert surveillance task:

‘A lot of the jobs we get is a manager or an executive officer who was disgruntled with his company, he would go to a competitive company and say look I’ve got these secrets, I’ve got these clients or whatever, I want to come to you and work for you, I’ll bring these with me, which is against civil... well you’re not allowed to do it within their contract obviously. And that’s generally when we get called in. So when we find him meeting with competitors, we’ll record conversations at their restaurant table, café table, park bench, whatever. And then at the end of it, whether that be one weeks’ worth, two weeks’ worth, or with a particular individual three and a half months of evidence, we go “oh you met this person or you met that person”, it’s so conclusive that they haven’t got a leg to stand on, so it [the dispute] goes no further.’ (Stuart)

The exact size of the covert surveillance market in the United Kingdom is difficult to define; there remains no official record of the numbers and identities of actors involved in the sector. Andrew estimated that there were 60-70 companies in London that provided 'sophisticated surveillance' as either a sole service or as part of a basket of security services that they offered. These companies all subcontracted from the same 'pool' of 50-60 specialist commercial surveillance operators who worked exclusively in covert surveillance roles, or used the services of a few hundred other contractors who would conduct covert surveillance as part of a wider portfolio of security work. He proposed that there were 'probably a thousand' companies that would provide 'unsophisticated' covert surveillance. The majority of the latter he described as 'small private detective agencies' or 'one-man bands'.

Participants drew a divide between 'unsophisticated' surveillance, which they did not consider to be part of the private military security field and, higher status, 'sophisticated' surveillance, which was. 'Unsophisticated' surveillance involved a single, or pair of operators following a surveillance target¹⁸⁸. The act of following a person may have been conducted on foot or by vehicle and. At this level, mobile telephones were often used to communicate between operators and cameras or mobile phones used to record evidence of the target's activity. By contrast 'sophisticated surveillance' utilised techniques that better obscured the surveillance operators' identities and employed more complex technical means to acquire and record evidence of the surveillance target's activity. In most cases this meant that a team of four or more surveillance operators was used, among whom the responsibility for actively watching the 'target' (called 'having the eyeball') rotated. This practice aimed to minimise the chance that the 'target' would become aware of the surveillance through the persistent presence of a single follower. This type of activity required training and practice and would take place both on foot and using vehicles.

The complexity of 'sophisticated surveillance' meant that effective and unobtrusive coordination of this larger team required communication between

¹⁸⁸ The object of surveillance activity.

team members using specialist covert radio equipment. 'Sophisticated surveillance' also involved the use of a wide variety of technological aids. This included GPS tracking units that could be attached to vehicles, sensitive audio recording equipment to capture conversations at a distance and a variety of electronic eavesdropping devices (bugs). A range of 'aids to surveillance' were also used that could include disguises, motorbikes, specially outfitted surveillance vans, and liveried vehicles including black taxis (Hickman, 2014). Further, 'sophisticated' surveillance incorporated a number of sub-disciplines that could be provided to clients, either in the form of training, or direct service provision. These included counter-surveillance (the act of establishing if a third party was surveilling a client) and anti-surveillance (a series of actions carried out by a person under threat to identify and avoid surveillance). These latter disciplines often crossed over with close protection and so many practitioners undertook both types of work ¹⁸⁹. Stuart described the workings of a typical covert surveillance job for a corporate client:

Commercial Covert Surveillance Case Study

'We had a good one recently, a guy was stealing top end clothing from the warehouse he worked at. He was one of the managers. The place he worked at didn't have great security around it. It was a new place they'd moved into which hadn't been thought out, so the temptation to steal was a lot greater because the risks were lower. [As he was doing this] we've covert filmed him over a number of nights, taking this stuff out, hiding it in his car, distributing it to his friends. We had his lock up; well a lock-up? It was a house! They called it a lock-up. We had all the evidence against him. On the actual night where we had police with us, we got him with the merchandise in the boot of his car from the factory. In cooperation with the police we stopped him there and then brought in the police who arrested him and carried out everything else. Now that spreads like wild fire through the rest of the factory, if you're going to do something wrong you're going to get picked up. But [the client] picked up on it a bit too late, he'd been doing this for 18 months, got away with about a million and half pounds worth of clothing, Dolce and Gabbana and Prada and all that sort of stuff.

We recorded the guy on 3 separate nights, putting the stuff into his car and distributing it. So we had photographs, we had video, everything he was

¹⁸⁹ See also Sarah Ford's (1997:263) memoir.

doing and where he was going. We put all this into a file, along with our logs and reports, give that to the police and said, look this is what he's done, this is where he's been doing it, this is how he's been doing it. And the police took that off us and said "thank you very much". They arrested him and we said, "well you need to search his lock up and you need to search his house". This is then when you start treading into a minefield. Police don't have the same powers as us, we can do a lot more than they can do. For them to carry out the operation that we did would take months and months of paperwork and red tape bureaucracy. Whereas with us it takes a phone call, that's it.

So, yes the police have their hands tied to a certain degree. If the guy has been stealing they've got to have the evidence that he's been stealing; they'll say, "how do you know he's been stealing?". Because we've caught him with it! I mean that's why they [the client] brought us in. Here's the evidence he's been stealing, this is what he's been stealing, it's all documented. But again, the police were so... their powers were so limited, it became a bit of a farce and the company involved got very annoyed with the police, they couldn't take it any further and it took a while to come to court. I've just had a letter, about two weeks ago, the guy went to court eventually, pleaded guilty to stealing the stuff and was given a 15-month jail sentence, suspended for 24 months and he had to do 200 hours of community service. (Stuart)

This case study provides a good technical example of the type of work in which covert surveillance operators engage, and the ambiguous relationship they have with state law enforcement bodies. However, Stuart and Andrew both emphasised that work from which criminal charges may result forms only a small part of activity in the covert surveillance sub-field. The majority of the interviewees' work was connected to civil disputes between corporate clients, in particular those relating to the prevention of the unauthorised transfer of sensitive commercial information to competitors by senior executives within the client's own organisation.

Stuart estimated that 80% of his work was in the United Kingdom, and the vast majority of this was in London, particularly the City of London and affluent areas of the capital such as Mayfair and Kensington and Chelsea. Indeed, the bias toward London was marked; he recalled only having done 4 'jobs' in other areas of the United Kingdom since the firm was established 7 years ago. The remaining 20% of Stuart's work was conducted overseas. These contracts were carried out in locations as diverse as China, the United States, Western and Eastern Europe as

well as in territories associated with luxury recreation or expatriate residence such as the Maldives. Both Glen and Andrew described a similar distribution of work, with covert surveillance in the United Kingdom forming 80% of the work they conducted or commissioned. This was predominantly London based, with a small amount of work in the Channel Islands. The remaining 20% of Glen's work was evenly mixed between conflict and post conflict environments such as: Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and regions of Africa, and less 'hostile' regions such as mainland Europe and China. Of this second category a significant proportion was conducted in regions associated with the tax residence, or recreation, of economic and financial elites e.g. Monaco, the Maldives, Bermuda, the Caribbean and the British Virgin Islands. The overseas work Andrew commissioned was predominantly in Western Europe and the United States.

Of the 30 interviewees, 11 had been involved in covert surveillance in the United Kingdom during their careers (either conducting or commissioning). Of these, three of the participants were, at the time of interview, involved in the provision of covert surveillance as their primary business activity. Other interviewees had conducted commercial covert surveillance in the United Kingdom as part of a broad range of security activity that they undertook, much of which would ordinarily have involved employment overseas in 'high threat' environments. In this Chapter I focus on participants for whom covert surveillance in the United Kingdom had formed the majority of their working portfolio.

Stuart and Andrew had both served in the British Army, Stuart as a Special Forces surveillance operator with 14 Intelligence Company and Andrew as a covert human intelligence specialist with the Force Research Unit (FRU)¹⁹⁰ and its successor units. Stuart's work in the covert surveillance industry incorporated both entrepreneurial activity and operational service provision. He was businessman, a security/surveillance operator and a trainer. Andrew began his private security career working for a number of security contracting companies. More recently he had becoming the corporate Chief Security Officer for a London

¹⁹⁰ The Force Research Unit was a British Army organisation that engaged in the identification, recruitment and development of agents within paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland (Lewis, 1999).

based financial institution. Stuart and Andrew's military service had placed them both in the United Kingdom military's 'high policing' structures (Brodeur, 1983; 2005; 2010) during the Northern Irish 'troubles' of the 1980s and 1990s. During this period covert elements of the British military, including 14 Intelligence Company and the FRU were alleged to have been involved in state sanctioned illegality in their fight against republican and loyalist paramilitary groups (Foot, 1990; Holroyed and Burbridge 1989; Urban, 1992; Punch, 2012). Thus, both Stuart and Andrew were representative of those elite military actors involved in the application of the British 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) in Northern Ireland.

Glenn was a former member of a United Kingdom intelligence and security agency and Adam had, originally, served in a Commonwealth military before taking up employment with one of that country's intelligence and security agencies. Both worked in commercial covert surveillance in London. Glen's background was an intelligence officer and agent handler; his particular expertise being in the conduct and avoidance of surveillance as part this role. Adam's work involved technical support of secret intelligence operations; particularly the use of technology to attack and compromise information held by individuals and organisations opposed to the interests of the state. This involved the construction, installation and use of a wide range of technical 'means' including electronic eavesdropping devices (bugs), tracking devices, covert photography and video, as well as the compromise of IT and telecommunications systems. Both Glen and Adam left government service during the early 2000s and then worked in private security. Glen owned his own security consultancy business. Adam worked for a number of companies on a freelance basis. Both were involved in the practical conduct of covert surveillance.

Employee Constitution

'There is a lot of ex-police out there doing this and they're generally, I would say, average to poor. They have their way of working, which is a different way. We've come up against some foreign teams before who have their way of working, which is not wrong, just different, but all of them are not as good as the British [army] system. Now even though the police is a British system, they still have their own system and depending on what

unit they were from, the threat levels were different. So if you're talking about police units who are working against organised terrorists, as they do in Northern Ireland, then their threat level is different to say a police unit who are working against burglars, thieves, pickpockets, that type of thing. You get somewhere in the middle of the covert units, kind of like SOCA¹⁹¹ who work against drugs and organised criminals, so again, they carry their own threats. But depending on what unit they used to work for [standards vary], generally the ex-police surveillance operators that we see are at best what we would call average.' (Stuart)

Participants described a sector where employees with differing backgrounds and experience inhabited different spaces within the field of employment. The 'unsophisticated' end of the spectrum, referred to as 'ill-conceived lower end, one man insurance investigation type surveillance' and 'little better than stalking' (Glen) was the preserve of former police officers who comprised 70% of the operators working in this area of the market. At the 'sophisticated' end of the market, former military and security/intelligence service employees were in the majority by a similar proportion.

Thus, former state employees held different relative positions and status within the field; former military Special Forces, state security and intelligence service employees populating the industry space encompassing 'higher status' or more complex surveillance work; former military employees having limited mid-level crossover with 'lower status' former police operatives; while former employees of security and intelligence agencies maintained a more elite status that (largely) precluded them becoming involved in more pedestrian 'private detective' work that was the preserve of former police officers. Industry identity was created through concepts of inter-professional competition and symbolic boundary construction (Abbott, 1988), with the operational and jurisdictional boundaries of state service replaced by the somatic and symbolic capital associated with the practitioner's former role. In this, the distinction between those engaged in elite 'high policing', i.e. acting in direct defence of the state (and imputed with the exceptional status discussed in Chapters 1 and 4) and the lower status roles

¹⁹¹ The Serious Organised Crime Agency of the British Police, now the National Crime Agency

associated with the protection of the public was clearly in evidence (Brodeur, 2010:226).

The Covert Habitus

A central construction in the field of commercial covert surveillance was the concept of secrecy. Covert surveillance was, by definition, an act carried out in secret and the world of 'clandestine' activity was presented as markedly different from the 'reality' of civilian life. Stuart discussed the reaction of trainees on the covert surveillance courses that he ran when they first began to understand the ubiquitous nature of covert activity by state authorities, as well as criminal and commercial groups:

'You know there are a lot more people doing 'dark arts' out there than we could imagine. We pretty much think we know most of it but I'm sure there is a lot more going on and people would be absolutely shocked. But there's more and more about it getting released. I think there was a documentary about a month ago about a specialist police unit who were taking on the names of dead people to give them a cover¹⁹², which was quite shocking to some people. A lot of people would take it with a pinch of salt, you know I'm not surprised, it's just coming from whichever background you are from how surprised you are about that.

When you show someone just coming into [the covert surveillance field] what is actually going on they are very wide eyed and almost in disbelief. When we train our guys here, day 1 we say "for the moment you see this much, by the end of the training we're going to let you see this much", and they do, they are very grateful for allowing [them] into that 'web' for a while."

You see from personal experience when it dawns on them what's going on out there. Some people are very overwhelmed, you know you get into the psychological side of it where the brain shuts down where [people think] I can't believe it, this is not happening, stick my head in the sand. It happens when we're training our guys, they work with us and they're like "my god I didn't realise that happened", [it's like] landing on another planet.' (Stuart)

¹⁹² Stuart refers to reports of the use by the Metropolitan Police of the names of dead children when creating cover identities for undercover officers (Lewis and Evans 2013a, 2013b).

Stuart was proprietary over this covert 'reality', referring to it as 'our world'. This secret world was one in which morality was viewed differently¹⁹³. Facets of behaviour that would be considered surprising or even shocking to the uninitiated were routine to the covert operator. Indeed the practices of the 'covert world' were described as being sufficiently removed from the experience of ordinary people to mean that that exposure for the first time caused emotional discomfort akin to cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Thus, while the proliferation of knowledge about specialist military and counter terrorist operations described by Stuart in Chapter 5 had resulted in increased societal consciousness of covert activity, the reality of this phenomenon, its scale and prevalence in society, was profoundly shocking when first encountered by the uninitiated.

Boundaries

'How far do we push? We work to a code of ethics; no one has regulated the surveillance industry thus far. In the military you work to a set of rules laid down by RIPA 2000¹⁹⁴, and that's it, that's as far as we go. In the civilian world, because as a private company we don't have those limits, that's not to say we would go and break the law, we wouldn't, we would go so far and then we would say to the client, sorry we can't do that' (Stuart)

When asked about actions that constitute transgression interviewees almost universally used the yardstick of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, or RIPA (UK Government 2000), that governs state surveillance activity. Stuart provided examples of where security companies had been approached by clients to carry out acts that he considered improper or illegitimate: 'They'll get asked to put cameras or bugs into places where they shouldn't'. He highlighted how, under RIPA, such actions would be considered 'intrusive surveillance' and would require specific authorisation by a senior officer before they could be carried out. Stuart explained that, in his civilian capacity, this was a boundary he would not be prepared to cross:

¹⁹³ See Loftus et al. (2016) for a similar description of how ethical norms differ between police units involved in 'overt' uniformed policing and those involved in covert work.

¹⁹⁴ The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (UK Government, 2000) was instituted to govern the actions of state law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies when conducting investigations into terrorism of serious criminality.

'If you're a civilian, you're not beyond the law, just because you're doing a completely different job to everybody else doesn't mean that you're beyond the law. You might drive a bit faster sometimes, but then so does a sales rep who is late for a meeting. You might go through the odd red light, but so does a mini-cab driver. That's about as far as you're probably going to push it. But we know people who have placed bugs in people's houses when they shouldn't have, which is against the law, against human rights as well, and is something that we're not prepared to do. So the odd misdemeanour, fine, but not any of the heavier stuff.' (Stuart)

Thus, boundaries of conduct within the sector were mutable. Transgression was not interpreted simply in terms of legality or illegality but was instead most commonly expressed through the more value neutral language of 'professionalism'. Andrew observed:

'Sometimes the business gets tarred with a bad brush. A few people have been unprofessional, done something they shouldn't, or pushed it a bit too far. Usually you find there's a good reason; but part of the skill is knowing when to push it and when not to.' (Andrew)

Practice within the sector involved a range of behaviours that fell within or beyond the bounds of contention. For example: the recording of conversations in a public space (a café, restaurant or park) using listening devices (bugs) was generally considered acceptable; however the planting of these devices in a private home was questionable. Breaking into a house to recover information was not acceptable, but the recovery and inspection of domestic or business waste left for collection was, even where this was on private property. Gaining access to premises or to data through misrepresentation (sometimes known as 'proxy approaches') was also acceptable, albeit a practice more prevalent in the 'business intelligence'¹⁹⁵ field than that of covert surveillance. The installation of GPS tracking devices on target vehicles was acceptable, but the legitimacy of installing voice recording listening devices in a target's vehicle was a matter of debate, as was the installation of listening devices inside telephone housings fitted to the

¹⁹⁵ Business intelligence is field of commercial activity separate from, but connected to private security and covert surveillance. This sphere of activity involves the employment of a range of intelligence techniques to provide a competitive advantage to private individuals and businesses, (see O'Reilly, 2015)

exterior of a subject's premises. As such, the boundary between normative and transgressive behaviour across the field was situational and highly contingent.

Stuart indicated that some firms and operators within the covert surveillance industry were prepared to carry out acts that he would consider unacceptable or potentially harmful. Beyond this, he also recognised the potential for the intelligence that he provided clients to be used in a number of ways, some of which may engender harmful outcomes (i.e. to coerce or intimidate). He observed that, at times, understanding who clients were and why they were commissioning covert surveillance was difficult. This made assessing the ethics or legitimacy of a proposed piece of work problematic, 'You get some tasks where you're not sure which side you're working for and sometimes it takes a couple days to see what this person's lifestyle is like and you think, what's actually going on here?' (Stuart). Andrew described a task he conducted in the UK and abroad where he experienced similar ambiguity:

'Sometimes you can't tell what the client is really trying to get [from the surveillance]. We did a job looking at an arms company in [a town in Eastern Europe] so the job was a bit in London, where they did business and a bit out in [an Eastern European Country]. The clients were Gulf Arabs, but it came to us through, I would say some 'reputable contacts'¹⁹⁶. We thought they must be looking at the factory because it was a security thing¹⁹⁷. That made sense, because of where we got the introduction from. As it went on we began to see that the people who had hired us were actually in the ownership of [the arms company], but very 'under the radar' if you like – so it seemed like they were checking to see how visible that was. A kind of penetration test¹⁹⁸. And you begin to wonder what these guys are up to? Obviously you can't ask, you just give them the [surveillance] logs, video, reports etcetera, and they do with it what they like' (Andrew)

In practice the motives of the client contracting covert surveillance were not always transparent. Both Stuart and Andrew recognised that their labour may have produced harmful effects but did not consider these consequences to fall

¹⁹⁶ In this case a well-established Business Intelligence consultancy; see O'Reilly (2010) for an analysis of this specialist field of private intelligence work.

¹⁹⁷ A concern about the illegal importation or sale of weapons in the Middle East or Gulf region.

¹⁹⁸ A practice where an organisation checks the integrity of their own security measures by simulating an attack or attempted compromise of their own premises or organisation.

within their moral jurisdiction. Indeed the encompassing secrecy of the sector seemingly prevented security contractors from conducting any meaningful due diligence on the clients contracting their services. Instead the interviewees' construction of transgressive behaviour in the sector was limited to discussion of the 'tactical' opportunities open to the individual operator; the structural social harm that may result from the employment of their skills was considered to be a 'higher order' concern that existed beyond the bounds of the practitioner's moral or practical jurisdiction.

Overall interviewees presented a picture of an industry that worked to widely varying standards. Stuart described the uncertainty this engendered in operators who moved between companies that had very different interpretations of normative and transgressive conduct:

'Obviously, there are good people and there are bad people in the world. Some people will go further than others and we know some companies will step over that line and do what they can for the client, because what's more important to them at the end of the day is the dollar or the pound, and they'll do whatever they need to, to secure that pound. [...] We get sort of proof in the pudding, when our operators go off and work for someone else. There's no difference in the job, they're watching someone, where they go and who they meet. But when they come back to us there's a sigh of relief as if to say "oh I'm back on a proper job", because the standards of another company are different to the standards of our company. Where we set the level, say this is what you need to do, however, here's the line in the sand, that's as far as we go. They go and work for another company, there are different boundaries.' (Stuart)

Despite this, involvement in unethical practice or illegality while employed by other companies did not prevent Stuart from re-employing these same operators. Nor did knowledge of this conduct prevent operators from continuing to work within the sector as a whole. Instead the secrecy of the sector ensured that information about transgression did not generally proliferate, and where it did, was unlikely to provide grounds for exclusion or censure. In this respect the domestic covert surveillance field appeared to lack even the informal controls of 'the Circuit' or the international 'fringe'. Instead the sub-field's professional culture was replete with 'differential association' (Sutherland, 1949:234); the

surveillance operator's transgression supported by the predominance of definitions that accepted such behaviour as a 'reluctant compromise' an 'exceptional necessity' or simply the reality of turning a profit.

Military Capital

Although the United Kingdom would generally be considered a 'low threat' security environment the military disposition, and its associated capitals remained key to participant narratives. Stuart placed emphasis on the more dangerous elements of the surveillance operators role and highlighted the importance of the somatically conditioned driving skills he had acquired during his specialist military training (Ford, 1997:81):

'We've had a number of car chases on the motorway (laughs), or I should say 'follows', where some people will drive at extremely excessive speeds, which is detrimental to our health and safety but also against the law. You could lose your licence; if you lose your licence, you've lost your livelihood. Therefore, at times we've gone to certain speeds, where we'll say right, if he maintains this then we'll leave him, we're just going to drop him. It's not safe, it's illegal and if he's going to continue doing this then we're not following him and we'll go back to the client and say, "look just be aware that the person we're following is driving a hundred mile an hour plus down motorways in bad conditions and is driving dangerously. We are not prepared to follow them when they start doing that", and a hundred times out of a hundred the clients have said "yeah, no problem, totally agree". (Stuart)

Stuart's description of the risk associated with his work was primarily personal and instinctively physical. The enthusiasm with which he described high speed driving and car 'chases' was unmistakable. However, he quickly 'checked' himself, reverting to the more dispassionate vocabulary of 'the follow', a professional term for trailing a suspect. This change in register accorded with the construction of professionalism that presented decisions relating to risk as taken on the basis of dispassionate rationality (Higate, 2012a). However, in this exchange the tension between the life-affirming 'action' inherent to military identity (Jelušić, 2005, Woodward and Jenkins, 2011) and the maintenance of a professional 'front' more compatible with societal expectations less tolerant of masculine self-actualisation was evident (McElhinny, 1994:164).

The 'danger' theme was less pronounced in the narratives of participants without a military background. Here the emphasis was on avoiding 'compromise' (i.e. the target becoming aware of the surveillance operation). Adam observed that, 'There are always ways to get around it [car chases], we can put trackers¹⁹⁹ on them'. He accepted that some of these solutions may result in a greater degree of intrusion into the target's privacy, but considered this a justifiable compromise against the risk of physical injury presented by high-speed driving. Thus, the acceptance of physical danger formed part of former military participants' discourse in a way it did not for those without a military background. In a similar vein, military interviewees referred to the physical and embodied nature of surveillance work to a greater extent. Stuart described how he had provided training to people from a civilian background intending to work in covert surveillance. He emphasised the military-style physical rigour (Higate, 2000) of the training that he provided and asserted that his trainees were 'mentally and physically exhausted' at its conclusion and had 'blistered feet'. Non-military participants, by contrast, placed greater emphasis on perceptiveness and the ability to adapt oneself to different environments than on the ability to overcome physical adversity.

While interviewees recognised that the covert surveillance operator was rarely, if ever exposed to extreme physical threats or challenges in the UK environment, the exposition of military values and experience remained important in the marketing of covert surveillance services. Andrew proposed that the professional skills of the covert surveillance operator were used by clients in circumstances of conflict where the client was trying to establish dominance in a dispute, and that the military or Special Forces 'brand' underwrote the performance of the operator in circumstances of opposition:

'The client's got a problem and they need that sorted out. They need people who they know will be able to do the job even if the subject sees them and turns nasty; guys who won't stop if they see something they don't like, or get squeamish. That brand, if you like, the military brand is useful. I've had executive clients who only wanted SAS even though [covert surveillance] isn't what they do. They want the brand, to know that the people they are hiring are committed. That they can go the extra mile – do things that other

¹⁹⁹ Global Positioning System satellite tracking devices that can be affixed to a vehicle magnetically.

people can't or won't. These [executives] are people who are used to winning, used to getting their way.' (Andrew)

Covert surveillance was often used by clients involved in a dispute to re-establish control where it was perceived to have been lost, i.e. where the working consensus of the antagonists' social reality has been disrupted (Goffman, 1959:10). Thus, while the risk of death or serious physical injury was not present, the risk of an incident was and, as Goffman observed, 'when an incident occurs and spontaneous involvement is threatened, then reality is threatened' (Goffman 1967:135). Goffman proposed that an 'incident' can be seen to jeopardise the careful construction of social consensus through the unrestrained expression of individuals' needs. Covert surveillance was predominantly used to establish dominance within an on-going conflict, rather than for the avoidance of conflict, and was therefore more offensive than defensive in nature. In this context military 'somatic' capital was deployed to reassure the client that, even under the most trying circumstances of resistance, threat or compromise, the military operator was able to suborn the needs of the self to those of the task. In so doing they could be relied upon to support the maintenance of social order as the client perceived it; an undertaking to moral detachment in the face of competing claims to the antagonists respective 'rights and opportunities' (Goffman, 1961 in Rawls 1987:6).

Craft as a Refuge

Moral detachment replicated the circumstances of military service, but did so in conditions where the underpinning justification for the 'moral boundarying' of state service (i.e. reliance upon the normative link between the properly constituted authority of the state and the maintenance of the 'common good') was no longer in evidence. Indeed the commercial surveillance operator was not employed by the state and this was a challenge to both legitimacy and status. Stuart countered this anomic condition (Durkheim, 1960) by replicating the self-worth afforded by institutional affiliation with the state with a construction of self-worth more closely linked to the concept of personal expertise:

'[Being out of the military] has its ups-and-downs. Generally, you still work to a certain standard. Because I'm not in the military anymore it doesn't

mean I lower my standards. Me, I am still me, and I have a certain fundamental core that I will work to, and the results I get from it need to be at that standard. Now, that could be whether I am just building a guitar for my daughter to take to school, you put the same amount of effort into that as you would carrying out a covert operation for a company.

Obviously the security industry is massive, but at the same time it is a very small world. It is a very specialised area and you can go into it [but] if you're not good at it, you'll get found out very quickly, so it's a matter of how far you're willing to take the skills. There are people out there doing the same work as us but to a lesser level. [It's like] if you need your front room wall papered, you can get a quote, it's not always the cheapest, but it's going to be the best. It's the same with us, we're not cheap to hire, but what you get out of it is a lot more of a polished product. That comes down to the fact we've put a lot of personal investment [into it], and that's what it takes to get to this level.' (Stuart)

Adam expressed similar sentiments in respect of the construction and placement of technical surveillance equipment observing that 'whoever the client is, in your previous life²⁰⁰ or this one, if you do a good job, then the jobs done'. Thus the morally neutral measure of excellence in the 'techniques' of security was elevated in practitioner narratives to ameliorate the crisis of legitimacy created by estrangement from the institutions of the state. As I described in Chapter 4, the military conditioned the life and thoughts of the individual in a uniquely encompassing manner that constructed higher order considerations (legitimacy, ethics etc.) as the business of the institution and not the self. Thus notions of 'craftsmanship' were used to both replace and replicate the 'radical professionalism' (Larson, 1974) of the military. In so doing this reconstituted a life 'anchored to a tangible reality divorced from higher pursuits' (Sennett, 2008:20) and re-created familiar boundaries. By deploying the concept of 'craft' the issue of legitimacy was occluded by a focus on practical competence.

Yet, the 'craft' of surveillance differed from that of the civilian artisan. The desire to excel was not tied to the craftsman's struggle toward the realisation of an aesthetic concept. Covert surveillance left no legacy beyond the successful subjugation of the target (knowingly or unknowingly) to the control of their

²⁰⁰ Refers to military or state service pre-dating involvement in private security.

adversary (the client). The act of surveillance generated no public record that could be admired, neither was it a performance that could be viewed and applauded. Its success was measured only by the operator's domination of the target, and the opportunities for control that provided. While the language of craft was a comfortable refuge it remained a technique of neutralization (Matza and Sykes, 1957). Ultimately the conduct of covert surveillance was an exercise in power and not the aesthetic.

Technique and Legitimacy

'Some people who probably have been on the wrong end of surveillance, say it was wrong, because we're...stepping in on their lives, and say things we shouldn't be saying²⁰¹ and reporting facts that we shouldn't be reporting. But you know we've never had an innocent party. If you've got nothing to hide, then you've got nothing to worry about.

To me it makes no difference, whether a corporation is doing it or the military. It comes back to the saying of there's no smoke without fire. A corporation is not asking you to do something or look at one of their CEOs for no reason, and I can unequivocally say that we've never had an innocent party who we've looked at. It's what we do for a living and it's no different to say a IBM programmer who has access to loads of different key codes [...] sometimes the privileged information that we have on people is, without being ignorant, it's just another job. Someone's husband who's doing what they shouldn't be doing isn't of any concern to us. It's another job, it's an operation. You do that job and report back to the client.

If they think that something wrong is going on a lot of corporations nowadays have it written into their contracts, whichever way they word it, it basically says "we're allowed to look at you without you knowing". Now, whether that be to check their computers, scan their emails, check their clocking in times, clocking out times or whatever, it's written in the contract somewhere, which is how they get around it a lot of times these days. But you know it's really... to say it's of no consequence to us would be wrong... but if corporations are asking us to do something, it makes no more difference to us as to when we were being asked in the military to do something. Sometimes when we were in life-threatening situations and they

²⁰¹ Here Stuart refers to the disclosure to the client of details about the surveillance target that are detrimental or compromising, details that the victim of surveillance would have desired remained private.

asked you to do something, you might question yourself, if you have the ability to do that, but you wouldn't really question the order.' (Stuart)

Former military interviewees placed little importance on whether the suspected transgression they were hired to identify was constituted by the state or a commercial client. For Stuart the legitimacy of his work was determined by the professional expertise with which he carried out the surveillance task. The adoption of technique as culture allowed for the construction of a normative morality based on the evidence of practice; if the surveillance was effective and professionally conducted, Stuart's work was legitimated. In this interpretation the ultimate ethical justification for covert surveillance was provided by its efficacy in uncovering 'wrongdoing'. Stewart's assumption of the 'guilt' of his targets served to neutralize any moral responsibility he may have felt for the compromise of privacy in which he was engaged. The ethical implications of his work were further distanced through the lack of meaning he attributed to the things he observed. The person being watched was depersonalised through the detached bureaucratic rationality of the observer (Bauman, 1991), the target 'othered' (Loftus, 2009) to avoid moral ambiguity.

Moral ambiguity was not restricted to decisions made by operators alone. Stuart observed that many corporations and private offices²⁰² 'get around' the legal and ethical problems associated with the practice of covert surveillance against their own staff by making acquiescence to such intrusion a contractual condition of employment. By requiring the pre-emptive surrender of privacy beyond the workplace, employers sought to constrain the employee's freedom of association where this was seen to conflict with the company's interest in the maintenance of commercial confidentiality. The ability to 'police' (Reiner, 1997) the employee's beyond the workplace fundamentally changed the nature of the relationship between employer and employee, the reliability of the latter's conduct now conditioned through the threat of detection and censure as opposed to the cultivation of loyalty.

²⁰² The office responsible for the management of the personal and business affairs of a high-net-worth client.

Military participants' acceptance of the extension of the power of an employer into the private sphere was, perhaps, unsurprising. The intrusion of the state, into the private realm of the individual during military service was complete (Scott and Morgan 1993:16). As such, military identity provided an interpretive framework that isolated ethical concerns and remained focused on a successful conclusion of the surveillance act through the 'unreflective accommodation' created by embodied practical consciousness (Higate, 2005). The dominance of this interpretive framework was cemented by the perceived superiority of practice associated with the defining experience of military service. Thus, for Stuart embodied practice, proven in the face of lethal opposition in Northern Ireland had a legitimacy of its own.

Developing Business

So what of the consumers of covert surveillance? The field incorporated a wide variety of client organisations and actors who used covert surveillance services:

'The client could be any one of the 50 blue chip companies that work in the City²⁰³. We have worked for foreign royal families, we've worked for the British Royal family, we've also worked for private clients, who are going through a messy divorce, that's both on the husbands' and the wives' side' (Stuart)

'We do work for mainly for high-net-worths and large corporates, but we do work for Her Majesty's Government, we've assisted in training for the agencies, in fact we have training contracts with the agencies. We work on the training, rather than on the operational side with them. Likewise with MOD²⁰⁴, although MOD have come to us for operational advice as well in specific areas on the technical [surveillance] side. And foreign governments or agencies as well, for example we've just finished some work for an anti-corruption agency in Africa where they're looking towards the 'kite' mark of UK PLC. [This] sells well overseas in terms of the belief that the best training you can get is from the British.' (Glen)

Adam's client base was similar to that of Stuart and Glen; he described the institutions and individuals he worked for as 'The British establishment'. The

²⁰³ The City of London

²⁰⁴ Ministry of Defence, see Ares&Athena (2017:17) for further details of this type of contracting.

majority of the people and organisations hiring his services held an 'elite' status, be that of traditional 'power elites' (Mills, 1956) or the 'fusion' of business owners, 'high level managers' and 'top level professionals' identified by Atkinson, Roberts and Savage (2012:2). The clients described by my interviewees conformed to a great many of the trends identified in the contemporary literature of elites and incorporated two main groups: those who had generated self-made access to economic capital (Bernstein & Swan, 2008) and those who were 'waged' and using capital that belonged to a parent organisation (Piketty & Saez, 2003). Among the latter group the companies involved in the commissioning of covert surveillance showed an orientation towards the financial services sector (Khan, 2012:363). Traditional dynastic elites were represented, but in lesser numbers than other groups, indicative of their continued presence, but relative decline in relation to other types of elite actor (Edlund & Kopczuk, 2009). What all these elite clients had in common was access to the economic and social capital to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the commodification of technique previously held as the preserve of the state. At the 'top end' of the market covert surveillance knowledge was being marketed directly to foreign governments and sold back into state organisations that had divested themselves of these specialist skills (Krahmann, 2010a). These state clients were represented by a more traditional 'power elite' (Mills, 1956) and it was through this we can see that the techniques available to elite private clients are of the same nature and quality as those employed by state organisations.

The maintenance of this elite clientele was a function of the fact that access to the practitioners of 'sophisticated surveillance' was, to some extent, restricted. While some of the larger security companies advertised openly, public facing promotional material would rarely provide details of their covert capabilities (beyond a limited reference to 'investigations'). Neither Stuart, Glen nor Adam's companies had any internet presence and had never engaged in advertising of any sort. Participants described sourcing commercial opportunities predominantly through a closed network of security industry contacts or former clients:

'I think the whole point is you don't advertise what we do. We get contracts by recommendation. People we have worked for, and we trust refer us on to

other people. Usually it's the security people, but sometimes the clients themselves. We've done a good job for them and they will pass on details when someone else has need of our services. After a point you don't find yourself short of work. Sometimes we have to turn down jobs. But I would I ever do a job for a 'walk in'²⁰⁵ off the street? Not a chance. (Adam)

Interviewees emphasised the importance of the 'gatekeeper' function carried out by the security consultants and managers directly employed by the client (people like Andrew). It was the security consultant/manager, with their shared access to closed networks of former police, military, security and intelligence services personnel, and a familiarity with their operating techniques, who provided the client with a solution that alone the client would be unable to identify and access. The security consultant was seen to provide a link between two 'fields': that of the client's normal commercial activity and that of specialist security activity. Nonetheless, Stuart articulated the relative unfamiliarity of many clients with the techniques of covert surveillance:

'In the civilian side, you've got to educate your clients in certain aspects [of surveillance work]. Whereas in the military it's a lot easier, the word would come down to say you're going to be going out and doing this, there's nothing you need to feedback apart from the intelligence that you're gaining. Whereas with civilian clients, you've got to do a lot of educating, and as long as they know what is at stake, they're willing to take the risks. We can probe so far into a person's life, gather intelligence on what is happening, who they're meeting etcetera. But they've got to be aware that if we push too far you're looking at a potential compromise. If that happens then that is going to make the subject you're looking at very aware of what is going on around them. Sometimes you're put straight onto a subject who is already 'surveillance aware' and straightaway that changes the parameters of what you're doing.

In the military, every subject is treated as [surveillance] aware and therefore, it's not a problem, resources are thrown at it, we're talking 16-man teams with an 8-man team back-up. Civilian life, you don't have the affordability to do that type of thing, so you need to do it as best you can with the resources that you're given. Depending on what they can afford, will depend on how far we can push. If they say, "I can't afford 8 men or 6 men", then we say, "we

²⁰⁵ By this Adam means a client to whom he has not had an introduction. The phrase is also used for a hitherto unknown source who volunteers information to an intelligence agency.

can do it with 4 men, however, this is all [the intelligence] you'll get out of it".
If they're happy to accept, that's fine, we can go for it.' (Stuart)

Where differences existed between civilian and military surveillance it was in the threat posed by the surveillance target becoming aware of the surveillance operation. The relative threat of 'compromise' affected the level of resource (operators and vehicles) required to observe the target effectively. However, where in a military context decisions relating to the commitment of resource would be addressed through an assessment of risk alone, in the field of commercial security questions of economic efficiency, and implicitly price competitiveness were also relevant. Thus operational decisions were made in an environment that was more complex than that of military service, but where a balance was mediated between the professional capital of the surveillance provider and the economic capital of the client.

So how did the exchange of these forms of capital function in practice? Stuart, spoke at length about this. He described his clients as unknowing and inexperienced in the 'reality' of the covert techniques he employed. In his construction, the surveillance operator adopted the role of a teacher, creating an understanding of the breadth and scope of possible solutions to the client's problem. The operator's expertise was dominant in this aspect of the dialogue, their command of the privileged knowledge of the covert world unchallenged. Stuart's described how his 'doxa', his 'feel for the game' and command of the techniques of state counter-terrorist operations, emboldened the client and served to legitimise their decision to use covert surveillance. However, this legitimation was achieved without ever specifically addressing the issue of legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1977:168). The client's contribution to the discourse was presented by Stuart as limited; restricted often to a discussion of the accessibility of financial capital to support the project. Andrew proposed that the client's agency was often reduced by the exigency of their circumstances, 'By the time its got to security sometimes they've tried most other things; they don't know what else they can do – security gives them those options'. This reinforced the often-

asymmetric relationship between the covert surveillance specialist and the client²⁰⁶.

Through the description of the discourse between the security practitioner and the client the importance of the surveillance operator's own 'elite' identity came into focus. They possessed not only specialist somatic knowledge (i.e. how to conduct covert surveillance), but also the symbolic capital associated with the conditions of 'the state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) in which these skills were developed and practiced. While the surveillance operator's 'epistemic power' (Leander, 2005) made them central to a field now shared by both elite civilian clients and former state actors, reflexively the client's habitus was changed to incorporate the practices of state-like exceptionalism promoted by the covert operator. The 'doxic' narrative of this specialist field (the 'common sense' logic of the conduct and use of counterterrorist techniques) served to legitimise and normalise the adoption of practice that may otherwise have engendered discomfort or 'hysteresis' (Hardy, 2008:131). Through this the elite client's disposition was altered, no longer constrained by the unexceptional solutions to conflict that previously bounded the field of their activity.

The client was not presented as an entirely passive actor. In the words of Loader, the act of the purchasing security was, 'redolent with social meaning'; the consumer acquiring both a tangible service (people 'doing something on their behalf) and engaging in a symbolic act that 'says something' about them and their relationship to others (Loader, 1999:380). In each case the satisfaction obtained by the client from the potential resolution of a dispute was only a part of the rationale for the purchase of the services of covert surveillance. Stuart observed how surveillance was used by high-net-worth clients in achieving dominance in personal confrontations with business or social rivals:

²⁰⁶ Leander described the '*epistemic power*' wielded by private security practitioners (Leander, 2005:805 and also Berndtsson, 2012). This power was derived from the consultant's ability to 'shape understandings' of security, often employing 'securitizing' (Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde, 1998) discourses that present threats as 'existential' and proposing exceptional forms of deterrent and countermeasure.

‘For a lot of the private clients it’s about competition and ego. They have ‘feuds’ and we are part of that [...] they like the idea of having that ability, the ability to get one over on the opposition’ (Stuart).

Glen, went further; describing how the symbolism of state exceptionalism was attractive to private and corporate clients, ‘A lot of them like having us around, we’re like their little secret service’. This attraction was most acute among the elite civilian clients rather than security industry ‘gatekeepers’²⁰⁷.

‘The civvies can be worse than the military or police. An ex-military security guy knows the score. They need us for a job to do a certain thing. There’s less showboating’ (Stuart).

Other participants supported the view that security services were often commissioned less for the functional value of the service provided than to demonstrate the social status of the consumer²⁰⁸, a dynamic that aligned with the observations of a number of scholars who see commodities as an expression of social differentiation and relative position (Bourdieu, 1984; Loader 1999, Longhurst and Savage, 1996; and Neocleous, 2007). Thus, while Loader (1999) proposes in his analysis of security consumer culture that, through a sense of a fictive victory over a constructed criminal other, ‘the consumption of policing and security may have as much to do with pleasure as with anxiety’, this analysis can be taken one stage further. Together the positional value of the security commodity, and the symbolic expression of ‘sovereign’ agency that this represented, often underpinned the purchase of this form of security.

Discussion: Creating the Elite Civil-Military Field

Through discussion of the manner in which business was negotiated between clients and covert surveillance companies, it was clear that the background and identity of the commercial surveillance operator had a significant effect on the development of civilian security practice. The skills of former state operatives

²⁰⁷ Heads of Security and Chief Security Officers working on the client’s staff.

²⁰⁸ This dynamic is particularly notable is the commissioning of close protection officers (bodyguards) by high net worth and corporate actors. ‘You get it when you do CP as well, when they just hire you to look good or important, like competing with each other’ (Nigel). Here the visible nature of security signified the ‘value’ of the protected individual and their ability to command physical force.

were accessed by elite actors, both corporate and individual, through consultants and security managers acting as 'gatekeepers' between the fields of commerce and areas of specialist security. Each of these 'clusters' of decision-making could be conceived of as a node (Johnston and Shearing, 2003; Shearing and Wood, 2003; Wood and Shearing, 2007) or an assemblage (Abrahamson and Williams, 2011), a collection of actors who together interacted to create a social space. Secrecy ensured that external influence was limited, and the paucity of oversight and regulation meant that these 'nodes' were, at best, only loosely 'anchored' (Loader, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; Loader and Walker 2007) to the state in any formal sense (e.g. the tenets of law were recognised as a boundary but only 'more or less' adhered to). The interaction between parties within and across these nodes formed its own sub-field in which the actors expended their relative capital (for the client; economic, for the surveillance operator; somatic and symbolic) and co-constituted a 'logic of practice' that normalised the application of the counter-terrorism technique of the 'exceptional state' to the resolution of the private client's problem.

The direct marketing of specialist covert military techniques to civilian clients can be seen to have created new 'fields' of activity that are neither wholly civilian nor wholly military in nature. The 'doxic', common sense, logic of the of the surveillance operator's solution to the client's security problem served to neutralize the anxiety (or hysteresis) that might otherwise have resulted from the proposed use of these highly invasive military techniques in the commercial arena. The power of the security practitioner's narrative was underpinned by the assumption of somatic reliability and dominance in the face of existential opposition common to all forms of military capital, but was given further weight by the symbolic capital of service in Special Forces. This capital, associated as it was with sovereign ability to act beyond the constraints of legal and societal norms without censure or stigmatisation, served to legitimise the decision to use covert surveillance where otherwise its use may have been considered disproportionate. The dialectic between the client and the surveillance practitioner engendered changes in the disposition of the client who, accepting the new possibilities presented by the use of techniques of counter-terrorism, altered

the field of commerce or private business in which they participated to a new normative state and, by so doing created a new, more hybrid field of practice (Bourdieu 1977: 72).

Through the process described above we can see the creation of a hybrid field of elite corporate practice in which the use of state-like capacities to monitor and control is accepted. While the nature of these practices is sufficiently at odds with the broader societal expectations of privacy and personal liberty as to cause even trainee surveillance operators discomfort, the social impact created by this change is simultaneously occluded by secrecy and normalised through its growing ubiquity. In this, the techniques of the 'state of exception' have become a means through which elite individuals and organisations resolve their problems and extend their influence. The commercial surveillance operator, interposed into the security dialectic as an agent of the market not the state, provides 'implied' legitimacy to the adoption of highly invasive practices in commercial and personal disputes. However, the 'public good', represented through the democratic legitimacy afforded to state organisations, and created in part by the wide ranging controls over state intrusion, was no longer a constituent factor in the discussion that surrounded the commissioning of the security act. This was replaced instead by an assumption of the implicit legitimacy of the elite client's interests based on their control of economic capital. Through recourse to the practices of the 'exceptional' state, the private client adopted the duality of the 'sovereign' standing at once both outside the norm while simultaneously remaining 'embraced' by the system. Thus, the paradigm for legitimation of exceptional forms of security practice was changed in fundamental ways, and with it the nature of sovereignty (Agamben, 2005:35).

The risks associated with the transgressions of individual surveillance operators, while concerning, were secondary to the potential risk associated with the change in the nature of security and governance presented by the creation of an elite civil-military field. These changes altered the range of possibilities between actors in the civil space; the relationship between the employee and employer was recast and the behaviour of elite individuals and institutions shifted to a more aggressive normative state (Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde, 1998). Beyond this, the increasing

capacity of elites to use military style solutions to resolve civil disputes, raised questions as to the continued efficacy of legitimate state interventions and, more broadly, the ability of the state to govern (Garland, 1996; 2001:110). There was some evidence of such tension in the investigation into phone hacking in the United Kingdom where covert surveillance firms were accused of acting to identify and disrupt police investigations (CPS, 2013). Thus, as Abrahamsen and Williams (2011:23-24) argue, the risks associated with changing security norms are not limited to precarious overseas environments. The changing habitus of security is being created through practice on the streets and in the boardrooms of major western cities, albeit invisible to the gaze of those uninitiated into the covert world.

Chapter 9 Findings and Conclusion

Academic work addressing the rise of private security has focused on two overarching endeavours. The first is the attempt to define the complex and plural nature of an emergent industry. The second, an exploration of the implications and consequences of the privatization of military and security functions, formerly held to be the preserve of the state. In this thesis I have explored how a group of people involved in one aspect of UK private security, the sale of military expertise in the commercial marketplace, experienced their work and shaped the development of the industry. I have analysed the practical and ethical boundaries established by these practitioners, and how these boundaries were derived and constituted (Frost, 2008). Inevitably this has led me to explore a set of separate but connected identities, those of the military person acting as a direct agent of the state; as well as the former military actor in the private realm. As such, this study contributes to the relatively sparse sociological literature that explores and describes the private security sector through the experiences of its practitioners (Brodeur, 2010:259). It also has relevance to the growing literature of civil military transition, and the more established literature on military identity and culture. Beyond this, I have sought to explore the implications of my interviewees' experience. On the basis of a single limited study, my proposals in this respect must be considered tentative, an invitation to further research and exploration. However, these findings serve to highlight the opportunity presented to the researcher by the study of security in its commoditised forms. Specifically, that private security can act as a prism through which our, often state-centric, understanding of conflict and security can be re-appraised. Inevitably this analysis also gives rise to conceptual propositions of the manner in which the growth of private security is altering the relationships of power in our society.

Overview of Findings

My findings cover three distinct, but interrelated themes:

Theme 1 – The Exchange of Military Capital

In this thesis I have proposed that the UK private military security sector forms a coherent ‘field’ of endeavour based on the commodification of military forms of capital and facilitating circumstances where the emotional reward of military style work can be re-experienced in civilian life. I discuss how this process encourages the replication of military culture and behavior in the commercial security sector. This supports and creates a liminal identity, where the private security actor seeks the occupational freedom of civil society while striving for the ‘meaningfulness’ of military work. The emotional incentives created by military service often exist in tension with the commercial imperatives of private security. Without effective processes of resocialisation to civilian norms, the aggressive practices of (often elite) military sub-units are reproduced in private security, perpetuating and promoting ‘state-like’ practices in the civil sphere. This creates a structural tension that can result in instances of violent transgression. In functioning security markets this tension has created an impetus for industry reform. However, it is also the manifestation of a fundamental paradox in state military culture that becomes highly visible when enacted in the private realm:

Theme 2 - Re-defining ‘Security’

This theme examines the tensions between state military identity and culture, and private security practice. I propose that analysis of the direct transference of military forms of capital into private security improves our understanding of the nature of security and conflict in both its private and state manifestations. Drawing on the literature of conflict studies, I illustrate how the transgressive potential created by the enactment of military capital in the private military security field is replicated in state military and security activity, particularly in complex counterinsurgency and peacekeeping operations. I argue that this tension derives from a more fundamental paradox than that of the comparative legitimacy of force when enacted by private actors rather than state employees. Instead highly gendered ‘offensive’ forms of military behavior, designed to enforce ‘dominance’ and create insecurity for the enemy, sit in tension with the more restrained and instrumental conduct necessary for the creation of sustainable security. I describe how these findings reflect emerging tensions associated with a state-centric societal construction of ‘security’. In identifying the link between

the 'exceptionalism' of sovereign power and the legitimate capacity to dominate others, we can see how functions that create insecurity are incorporated into our social construction of both 'governance' and 'security'.

Theme 3 - Commodifying Exceptionalism and Selling Sovereignty

This theme addresses the implications of the proliferation of military capital in the context of power. I argue that within the private military security market the symbolic power of state exceptionalism has become a capital in its own right. I analyse how the symbolic capital of elite military service, particularly that connected with 'exceptional' state activity, is instrumentalised in private security markets, both domestic and international. Veterans of special designation units, endowed with the ability to challenge and transgress conventional boundaries, have been central to the development of the UK private military security field. These actors have commoditised the symbolic capital of 'high policing' Special Forces to both create and enhance the potential for private clients to purchase and wield state-like capacities, and for state elites to 'privatise' their more politically contentious activities. This has involved the active engagement of private military security practitioners in the creation of new forms of hybrid sovereignty that have the potential to change the nature and distribution of power in society.

These themes run through the findings presented in this final chapter.

Private Military Security Capital and its Implications

The Military Private Security Continuum

A central finding of this study was the marked continuity of aspiration, culture and purpose between military service and private security employment that characterised my interviews with former regular, full-time military service-people²⁰⁹. In these interviews the difference between military and non-military participants came into stark focus, and was exemplified when Mike, an accountant with no military background, observed that military people had very different motivations and priorities to civilians. He highlighted the tendency among former military employees to remain highly invested in their history and status in service,

²⁰⁹ A similar continuity of values and motivation between military and private security contractors has been observed among US private security practitioners (Franke and Boemcken, 2011).

by comparison to competencies more closely aligned to commercial success in private security. The strength of this continued association with military culture and values was problematised by civilian co-workers like Mike, as well as by private security actors with a background in alternative state service (e.g. police or intelligence/security service). Indeed, an inability to move beyond their military past was identified as a negative trait by former military actors whose re-acculturation to commercial norms and practices was more advanced. Despite this, all my participants suggested that military service provided capabilities and experience that were foundational to the conduct of more militarised forms of commercial security, and were central to the constitution of the 'field' of private military security in which they worked.

Private Military Security as a 'Field'

For my former military interviewees, their description of private military security work rested on their possession of forms of embodied and symbolic capacity, created in military service, but proffered in exchange for contracted work and payment in the commercial security sector. This Bourdieusian 'capital' determined their entry and participation in the field of private military security, which could itself be conceived as a sub-field of the broader private security industry. This field involved participants who either possessed military capital, or other forms of capital necessary to support the exchange of military capital. This defined both the topology and extent of the field. The coherence of the field was most challenged when, in Iraq, an increased demand for security services created circumstances where, for the first time, actors with little or no military service were able to gain employment and work alongside military veterans. Interviewees described how this created a sense of anomie among former military practitioners with long standing experience in the sector (see Chapter 6). Here the military essence of the field's logic and practice was challenged and its boundaries disrupted. Paradoxically, the reduction in demand for the direct provision of military style services by 'western' actors in Iraq reduced the over-demand that had led to civilian participation in this field. This, together with the emergence of new sub-fields, such as maritime security, in which military expertise could dominate, meant that the sector emerged from the Iraq experience changed, but with its 'military character' still intact.

The military private security field did not dissipate as work in Iraq reduced. Instead sub-fields of private military security emerged as the sector explored new opportunities to derive benefit and fulfilment from the exchange of military capital, and in so doing perpetuate the field's continued constitution. This process was influenced by the quest for areas of commercial activity where the commodification of forms of behaviour central to the military habitus could be achieved. For many of those involved, this was done less with the primary aim of deriving substantial economic reward, than to create sustainable circumstances in which the emotional meaning and fulfilment of military style work could be re-experienced. As such, a sense of Bourdieusian 'doxa' ran strongly through many of the narratives presented in this thesis. The 'business' of private military security involved more than simple negotiation of commercial terms surrounding 'settled' services, the scope and effect of which were familiar to both client and provider. Instead it involved innovative new ways that military expertise could be applied to civil realm and, by necessity, the willful creation of a self-perpetuating logic justifying the propagation of military style approaches to security. Stuart's description of winning business in the covert surveillance sub-field is a good example (Chapter 8). He described a transparently a mimetic process by which he sought to perpetuate and extend a field in which the techniques of counter-terrorism could be commoditised and enacted, insulated from wider ethical considerations by constructions of 'craft' and professionalism.

These, and other examples, illustrate the unifying logic and practice of a field in which participants identified and innovated opportunities for military forms of capital to be enacted, and something akin to the military habitus (re)experienced. These actors established inter-field relations in which military capital could, at least at the outset, dominate. They overcame the 'hysteresis' (Bourdieu, 1977) that potentially accompanied the adoption of military style practices by civilian organisations using their symbolic capital, narratives of exigency and rhetorical techniques of moral boundarying. These actions perpetuated and extended the field. Thus, the field of military private security was less a structure than a process in which learned behaviours of physical dominance and control were commoditised to protect, or extend, economic capital. This, in turn, allowed

practitioners to (re)experience the emotional reward associated with these practices.

This unifying logic notwithstanding, the field of private military security existed in a condition of both tension and fluidity. Tension was clearly evident between the culture and practice of the various sub-fields that made up the field, e.g. between the neoclassical 'middle market' and the fringe fields of international military operations, and domestic covert surveillance; but was also evident within the sub-fields themselves. An example of this is the extent to which the values of corporate management within the 'middle market', with its rights based orientation and commercial focus, may have diverged from the sub-unit culture of the small operational teams that they employed. Practitioners tended to work in a number of sub-fields across time, with participants from different backgrounds exhibiting different 'trajectories' as they moved through the field; those actors with the greatest diversity of military capital (generally former Special Forces and special intelligence operators), showing the greatest mobility and practice across the greatest variety of sub-fields. This fluidity meant that sub-fields and their associated habitus were in a state of constant interaction, such that the values of the neo-classical middle market of security would continue to be influenced by the more reactionary militaristic culture of the 'fringe' as participants moved between different areas of practice.

Liminality – The Military-Civilian Hybrid

The importance of continuity between state military services and private military security, and the centrality of experiential reward (emotional fulfilment) meant that the identity of the private military security actor had an anthropologically liminal quality. Sitting neither quite in the military or the civilian realm this identity embraced the occupational freedom of civilian employment while constantly straining to replicate the 'meaningfulness' of state military service. This sense of liminality was much in evidence in my interviewees' descriptions of their 'transition' into military private security (Chapter 5). For example, for Victor the sector provided a form of semi-civilian work through which he was able to resocialise (Jolly, 1996) to truly civilian norms over time; for Kate, Ian and David it was a place where the emotional tariff of resocialisation (the banality of civilian

employment) could be, at least in part, defrayed or avoided. Within the field of private military security, the potential for resocialisation to a more 'civilian' value orientation was uneven. The most vocal advocates of structured resocialisation, be it through governance, training or recruitment practices, were senior corporate managers with responsibility for commercial operations or governance (for example, Roger's contributions in Chapters 3 and 6).

Without a resocialisation process between military and civilian practice, the potential existed for private security actors to engage in forms of behaviour that were antithetical to the creation and maintenance of security, and to the commercial interests of their employing company and clients. The first of these was explicitly articulated by interviewees; the propensity for the security contractor to use the relative autonomy of private security, and ready access to the means of coercive force (Rothe and Ross, 2010) to enact highly aggressive, 'offensive' behaviour in their work by using force more expansively than was required. A second form of conduct was described, but not problematised by interviewees, in which the security actor would function as a de-facto state agent within their organisation, even where this was not in the interests of their employing company and clients. For example Nigel's description of assisting UK military units in Iraq when they were threatened or under attack (Chapter 6) was clearly 'unofficial' behavior that could have resulted in casualties, potentially drawn the private security contractors into a more 'offensive' forms of activity, and situated the company in problematic political and ideological terrain. Thus, the embodied capacity to enact force inculcated by state military service had a paradoxical quality; it was both foundational and potentially highly counterproductive.

In many cases a move to private military security work represented an attempt to perpetuate, or recreate the conditions of state service in the private sphere. Here the distinction between the public and the private was often opaque, particularly when private security work was conducted on behalf of state clients. This created circumstances of subjective and objective ambiguity; where did the public end and the private begin? This made analysis of security through its relative legitimacy when enacted in the public and private realms problematic. Often this type of

analysis pre-supposed of the moral virtue of the state²¹⁰, and assumed that the worlds of 'the state' and 'the private' were sufficiently distinct and self-evident that practitioners could, or should, be able to identify and adjust to these distinctions independently. Instead, my interviewees described a field grounded in the continuity of state-identity in a way that belied the proposed 'un-shackling' of private security from its state antecedents (see Crawford, 2014 on Zedner, 2006).

Recent private security scholarship has begun to address the complex territory of disengagement and interdependence between private and public actors that the commodification of state security practices has created²¹¹. O'Reilly (2015) has written about the 'liquidity' that now exists between state and private 'high policing' practices in the corporate intelligence sphere, and the incentives that this hybridization creates for government officials contracting out security functions. This thesis builds on that literature by demonstrating the extent to which the simple desire of former state actors to continue experiencing the fulfilment associated with state-like work drives the internal logic of the 'supply side' of security commodification. This adds an additional paradigm to existing political instrumentalist theory and illustrates the sector's innate propensity to militarise (Leibknecht, 1907) those civilian fields with which it comes into contact.

Culture, Strain and Transgression

The fact that my interviewees saw themselves as engaged in a 'field' that incorporated certain rules and logic, did not mean that their opinions and beliefs were homogenous. In the development of her theory of 'New Wars', Kaldor highlights the distinction between 'communities of practice' and security cultures (Kaldor, 2018:21). While the private military security 'field' was identified by my interviewees as a common area of endeavour (i.e. a community of practice), individual participants expressed different 'ideas and practices' that reflected different security cultures. Pete's reticence about his involvement in the action against Boko Haram, and the strict lines drawn by Victor between legitimate

²¹⁰ See also Shearing 2009 on the problematic nature of state-centric analysis.

²¹¹ See Cusumano and Kinsey 2015, 2016:207, and Cusumano 2016 for emergent 'organisational' theories that see security outsourcing decisions as the result of changes in the relationship between different branches of government and civil society.

'security' activity and 'mercenary' work (see Chapter 7), were both reflective of a view of security culture aligned to a Cold War 'geo-political' (Kaldor, 2018:27) understanding of the proper role of the private practitioner of force. By contrast, Kate was much more tolerant of the direct use of force by private actors, providing this force was sanctioned by the state; a view more closely aligned to the contemporary security culture that Kaldor associates with the 'War on Terror' (Kaldor 2018:31). Roger's views represented what could perhaps be described as the corporate 'center ground' of private security culture; that of an ostensibly 'liberal peace' (Kaldor, 2018:29) cultural orientation, with the legitimacy of private security determined by its alignment with the rights based values of global civil society (Chapter 6).

Age appeared to be a significant factor in determining security culture. Older participants, those whose military service had begun in the 1970s, were less likely to see offensive military operations as the appropriate business of private companies, but were more prone to accept that these boundaries could be transgressed should the need arise, or the right inducement (financial or emotional) offered. Younger interviewees, who had joined the military in the 1980s and 1990s, expressed a more conformist view that was intolerant of the type of transgressive adventurism that would compromise the ostensible ethics of the rights based corporate 'center ground'. However, among these interviewees there was greater acceptance of a more aggressive normative interpretation of the legitimate role of the private actor in the provision of force. This superimposed a 'liberal peace' logic at corporate level over conduct that, particularly in fringe areas of the field, had a more 'War on Terror' character. Offensive action, up to and including direct involvement in combat operations, was considered a legitimate role for the private actor, provided that this had been in some way 'sanctioned' by a national government. Notably, at an operational level, the legitimacy conferred by 'rights based' corporate narratives was seen to be less important than authorisation by a sovereign power. This state-centric interpretation of legitimacy sustained even where government sanction was both covert and deniable.

Private military security occupational culture was also linked to the same military-private security continuum as capital. This was most evident in discussions about the boundary between normative and transgressive practices in the field. My interviewees attributed the potential for private security actors to engage in violent transgressive practices to two factors; the first was the formative exposure to highly aggressive, often elite, unit and sub-unit cultures in the military that were 'brought forward' into the private security realm. This was often coupled with the implication that professional deficiencies, or personal frustrations, manifest during military service underpinned this deviancy. Disproportionately, my interviewees (and participants in the field in general) were drawn from combat oriented sub-units. As such, through the lens of traditional military sociology, field participants would be expected to display a more institutional, and less occupational orientation to their military work (Moskos, 1986). Despite this, the impetus for transition from the military to civilian and/or private military employment often rested in 'value strain' (Agnew, 1992 and Zhang et al., 2011), or tension, between the individual and the military establishment.

The causes of the value strain that 'pushed' service people towards a decision to leave the military were varied, and were in some cases complemented by 'pull factors in the civilian realm such as Stuart's identification of the opportunity to profit from his training in covert surveillance (see Chapter 8). Most frequently the impetus for leaving the services was the strain between the institutional demands of the military establishment and the interviewee's desires to continue experiencing the initiatory, 'warrior culture' of the (predominantly) elite sub-unit. As such, the transition into private security was, for many, the result of the aspiration to work in circumstances that replicated the occupational flexibility of civilian employment, but also allowed them to engage in highly militarised forms of activity that perpetuated, or re-created, the emotional fulfilment they associated with the habitus of the combat oriented sub-unit. This strain was particularly evident where, as in Victor, Terry and Kate's accounts (Chapter 4), continued membership of the broader military institution may have constrained or prevented service or progression within the (elite) sub-unit.

In this context the creation of deviant, small-unit cultures in private security might be viewed as having a structural cause beyond that of 'ready access to the means of coercive force' (Rothe and Ross, 2010). Instead transgression resulted from the intersection of a number of factors. This included stymied personal or professional progression in military service, an end to the military career that resulted from 'value strain' with the military institution, a continued personal investment in aggressively masculine combat-unit sub-culture, and the relative autonomy afforded by some forms of private military security. My participants considered that these factors contributed to the creation of circumstances where the type of violent transgression described by Gary and Kevin (Chapter 6) was able to flourish. These findings suggest the need for further research into the military units and sub-units where these foundational cultures are generated (e.g. Thornborrow and Brown's 2009 study of Parachute Regiment culture) and studies that examine the differences in practices and performance between private security companies and groups conducting different types of security activity (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Through this our understanding of the intersection between state-cultures and private security practice can be further developed.

Private Military 'Security' and Conflict

Culture and Conflict -The Offensive 'Security' Paradox

The proliferation of military practices in the private security sphere, and the replication of military culture this created, had an impact that extended beyond the internal culture of the private military security firms themselves. In Iraq the industry was intrinsically involved in a project of stabilisation (some might say pacification) of a nation emerging from war. In this 'neoclassical market' (Petersohn, 2015), and against the background of a worsening insurgency, the aggressive conduct of some western security companies resulted in crisis of confidence among client organisations, both public and private. Under pressure from civil society groups and public opinion, these clients had begun to regard the provision of military style security by visible westerners as a liability. Governments and corporations sought to mitigate this liability through the development of regulatory governance and changes to their procurement decisions. This tension was often perceived to result from differing societal

expectations as to the legitimacy of coercive force when employed by commercial, as opposed to state actors. But the public/private divide that dominated much of the literature (Berndtsson and Stern, 2016) was not the whole picture. A familiar tension was evident in the scholarship of civil military relations where the conduct of counter-insurgency and peacekeeping by state forces was the object of focus. Thus, the tension that existed in the commercial security sector between the enactment of the more 'offensive' forms of embodied military capital, and the creation of stable secure environments where commerce, and society, could flourish was replicated in military thinking²¹².

The key to this fundamental tension was most evident in my interviewees' descriptions of the forms of capital created by military service and proposed for exchange in the commercial field. These forms of capital were based on a premise central to the provision of security in all its 'manned', rather than technological, manifestations. This was the implicit 'promise' of behavioural reliability in the face of physical danger or violent confrontation. Through this capacity, threats to a client, be that a sovereign state or a commercial entity, could be met and overcome, and the dominance of the patron's reality maintained in the face of challenge or contestation. This 'promise' of embodied reliability was the core essence of the capital proposed for exchange by labour in the private military security sector, and existed in a particularly robust form in the somatic 'fighting capital' I discuss in Chapter 4. This capital, formed around the behavioural reliability of the soldier, created through the development of the resilient military habitus, and designed to overcome the entropic emotions of fear and fatigue, demonstrated that the essential nature of physical security was as much about emotional control of self as physical control of others (Higate, 2017).

It was evident that military emotional conditioning created a paradox; the inculcation of competence in conflict created the propensity to engage in conflict²¹³. This is to say that, overcoming the entropic emotions created by

²¹² Compare for example Avant, on the 'integration of force with the referent social values surrounding violence' (2005:43) in private security and Catignani (2012) on the harmful resilience of aggressive operational level cultures in modern British Army counterinsurgency.

²¹³ See Jelušić 2005 on the sociology of emotions in the military.

circumstances of physical threat required that the soldier's emotional response to danger differ from that of the non-soldier. This change was enacted in military training through a process of intense reinforcement on multiple levels (physically, emotionally, socially and institutionally) and underpinned by an aggressive hegemonic masculinity that acted as a 'default' identity in the event that military training failed to provide an adequate cognitive template for individual conduct. Thus, military service created a disposition where engagement in the successful enactment of violence became associated with positive rather than negative emotions, and increased the propensity that opportunities to engage in conflict would be sought and not shirked. Indeed, this disposition was the emotional and physical topology of the 'offensive spirit' of the military combat unit.

Gender and Liminal Military Identities

The issue of masculinity warrants discrete analysis. As I have described in my methodology, gender theory was not at the outset the central epistemology of this thesis. Despite this, gendered identity forms part of the fabric of military life and is interwoven into my analysis where its relevance emerged in my participants' narratives. My subject group included a single woman and, as such, my findings in this area should be considered preliminary rather than substantive. However, Kate's almost unique position is worthy of comment not least because qualitative evidence of women's experience in Special Forces, and private military security is rare.

The disproportionately defensive response to Kate's participation in Special Forces surveillance operations (Chapter 4) demonstrated the extent to which this threatened the masculine construction of Special Forces activity, even where the act of covert surveillance benefited from gender diversity. However, this also revealed that, despite the centrality of masculinity to military identity, forms of masculinity were not uniform, and that some roles were seen to be more or less masculine in character even within Special Forces²¹⁴. Indeed, the further an activity was removed from the essence of 'warrior' conduct (the physical engagement and destruction of the enemy) the greater the potential that it would

²¹⁴ See Higate 2003 on this phenomenon in a military context.

be perceived to be relatively emasculate. Thus, the more limited remit of commercial security could be interpreted as displaying an inadequately masculine habitus by comparison to the combat units from which its members were recruited.

In some settings practitioners could be seen to have responded to this sense of compromised masculinity with compensatory hyper-masculine excess (See Gary and Kevin in Chapter 6). However, Kate's success in the private military security field, and the relative paucity of harassment and discrimination she experienced in her role, indicates that the gendered capital of competence in the use of coercive force may have a higher value when enacted beyond the military institution. As such, the logic of commercial security provision, and the more liminal identities that this creates, may have the capacity to subvert rather than reinforce the traditional gender hierarchies associated with state-centric practices of the military and private security (Stachowitsch, 2015). There are comparisons that can be drawn here with recent scholarship on military peacekeeping in which different stability support functions are argued to create different forms of 'masculinity' which themselves contain more 'feminine traits' (Duncanson, 2009; 2013; 2015). Thus, while there appeared to be a strong association between masculine gendered identity and competence in the more 'offensive' military capacities that (sometime violently) resisted any form of 'regendering' (Duncanson and Woodward, 2016). Alongside this was evidence that these forms of masculinity were increasingly recognized to be incompatible with commercial imperatives of private security provision. This meant that meant that the 'middle market' of private military security could be considered a potential locus for the type of 'regendering' reform that may benefit security cultures more broadly (see Stiehm in Duncanson and Woodward, 2016:5). More work in this respect is clearly warranted.

The 'Security' Paradox

Its gendered character notwithstanding, interpreting competence in the use of coercive force as a form of capital meant that I was able to identify a fundamental tension in the performance of what we call 'security'. Victor's (Chapter 6) description of the difference between offensive operations in war, and security

operations in a conflict environment, illustrated the distinctions between those activities designed to create security around a person or facility, and those designed to create insecurity for a group identified as enemies or antagonists. For Victor war was about 'proactively' hunting the enemy, seeking conflict in order to dominate, even where this placed service personnel (and others) at risk. The examples of transgression, or ethical ambiguity experienced by my interviewees, such as Craig's philosophical ruminations over his anti-poaching ambush (Chapter 6), and Pete's ambivalence over his work in Nigeria (Chapter 7), were based on similar distinctions. Where the aim of security was to dominate by bringing insecurity to 'the other', rather than security to the principal group, it ceased to be security.

This paradox was reflected in the increasingly contested nature of the term security. Luckham and Kirk (2012) have proposed that 'security' contained two 'Janus faced' concepts. The first involved a 'process of political and social ordering' (Luckham and Kirk, 2013:5) which included, but was not restricted to the use of coercive force, and which established a form of order determined by those in power. However, the authors also characterised security as an 'entitlement of citizens and more widely human beings to protection from violence and other existential risks' (ibid). Luckham and Kirk note that in seeking the establishment of political and social ordering, the actions of 'global security actors' often ran directly counter to the assumed entitlement of human beings to protection. This reflected the reality that in creating, or re-creating, any specific form of socio-political order, states and security actors may proactively target, and bring insecurity to groups who sought to assert their own, competing forms of order. By contrast 'protection' required no proactive 'offensive' initiative, or contest to establish a strategic 'dominance', but used only such force as was necessary to achieve tactical parity to safeguard the object of protection. Through this it is possible to see how narratives of 'offensive' security, oriented to the destabilisation of the 'other', contrasted with more restricted 'defensive' interpretations, and how this aligned with developing theoretical distinctions. In this context the 'offensive action' of the private military security practitioner

represented an 'exceptional' (i.e. state-like) claim to the legitimate use of force to secure the primacy of a certain type of socio-political order.

Sovereign and Sustainable Security

The tension created by these 'Janus faced' constructions of 'security' was highly visible when enacted by private security actors, in part because of the lower levels of cultural affection and legitimacy afforded to private security by comparison to their state counterparts (Loader 2007). However, as the literature of military sociology demonstrates, this tension was experienced by both private sector and state military/security organisations. To recognise this shared dilemma is to recognise that the state does not govern society only through the creation of security, but also through the creation of insecurity; the act of governance being the establishment of dominance through the judicious use of stabilising and destabilising applications of force. The social construction of states as providing (or even maintain a monopoly over) security was, therefore, a 'circumlocution' (Klockars, 1988), the state maintained its dominance through both the provision of security to favored groups and the application of insecurity un-favored ones. Thus the tensions ostensibly created by the expansion of private security were not only about gaps in perceived legitimacy between the public and the private – but were more intrinsically tied to the paradoxical social construction of 'security' being applied by both state and private actors. Here, as I describe below, the literatures of conflict studies and those of private policing elide.

Crawford's (2017) observation of the different nature of security when exercised by state and private policing practitioners draws similar distinctions between security that seeks to stabilise and protect, and that which aims to impose the dominance of a certain kind of order²¹⁵. He observed the persistence of a, 'normative logic', 'symbolic sovereignty' and 'punishment oriented tendency' in public policing which, in many respects mirrored the dominating tendency of the traditional military 'warrior culture' (Huntingdon, 1957). This tendency sat increasingly at odds with what Crawford has earlier described as 'sustainable security' (Crawford, 2014) and was recognised by participants in the domestic

²¹⁵ Crawford writes about the 'Double Edged Quality of Security' (2014:7)

private security sector, and their clients, as potentially detrimental to the creation of conditions of security for businesses and communities²¹⁶. Crawford contrasted this situation with domestic private security practices that were increasingly instrumental in nature, oriented to risk reduction and prevention, rather than confrontation and punishment (Crawford, 2017). Crawford's arguments reflect narratives within this thesis that emphasise restraint and proportionality as a key element of private security professionalism, such as Craig's reluctance to carry weapons in Pakistan²¹⁷ (Chapter 6) as well as distinctions made between the more 'defensive' and 'offensive' security acts that formed the boundaries of 'professional' and 'unprofessional' conduct in the sector.

In discussing how boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable conduct in private military security were constituted, the concept of 'professionalism' was a pervasive incantation; indeed, even violent transgressive behaviour was more likely to be described as 'unprofessional' than criminal. With the exception of maritime security, where almost panoptical control of the conduct of security actors was possible, notions of 'professionalism' formed both the 'recipe knowledge' (Chan, 1996) of the security encounter, and the single subjective cognitive scaffold upon which the aspirations of 'governance' (such as the rights based principles of the Montreux Declaration) could be translated into action. However, 'professionalism' more than any other concept was seen to derive from the actors' military past and, as such, remained stubbornly morally boundaried. This meant that when transferred into the private sector, ethical lacunae were papered over by constructions of craft and artistry (see Stuart in Chapter 8) and 'higher order' moral and ethical considerations replaced by the narrow prioritisation of 'client needs' (see Arron's description of his work in Iraq - Chapter 6). Thus, dominant constructions of security 'professionalism', tied as they were to state-like practices, failed to fully constrain the 'Janus faced' potential of security to create and perpetuate insecurity.

²¹⁶ In this Crawford's position has evolved. His (2014:4) work identifies private security as potentially threatening the status of security as a 'collective good'.

²¹⁷ See also Higate (2012a,b, and e) on concepts of restraint and as a constituent of private security professionalism.

Market Responses to the Security Paradox

There was some evidence that within the more transparent neoclassical market of security provision in Iraq, that both state and commercial clients identified the potentially 'Janus faced' nature of the military style security provision with which they had initially engaged. This changed the relation of capital within the field. The prevalent interpretation of my interviewees was that value of basic embodied military capital diminished rapidly in functioning markets. In particular, the employment of more economically efficient 'third' or 'host' country nationals' was generally considered to have been the result of a risk-averse response to the potential that hyper-invested violence by western contractors had to create newsworthy incidents (a concern considerably exacerbated by the Nisour Square massacre of 2007) ²¹⁸. This was coupled with the recognition that, as the uncertainty of the operating environment reduced, the retention of security contractors possessing highly developed 'fighting capital' was unnecessary²¹⁹.

Private security companies responded to this change in sentiment by accelerated engagement with civil society, and the creation of governance initiatives such as the Montreux Declaration (see Chapter 3). In the more mature and progressive parts of the market, this had created changes to practice that sought to ameliorate the most egregious potential for hyper-invested transgression by constraining the 'offensive potential' of private security conduct²²⁰. While scholars had differing perspectives of the extent to which developments of voluntary governance and self-regulation had substantively remediated the harmful potential of the sector

²¹⁸ This interpretation was underpinned by the racialised assumption of white, western military superiority (Chisholm 2014a; 2014b; 2016; McLellan, 2007), but is supported to some extent by Petersohn's (2012) evidence that locally recruited security staff were more aggressive in their response to security incidents than western contractors.

²¹⁹ This aligns with Petersohn's (2012) observation that a deficit of committed aggression by private military contractors was not a central concern in Iraq. Surveys conducted by the RAND corporation concur that they 'identified no reliable accounts of armed contractors showing a reluctance to enter insecure areas or to do their jobs when under threat' (Cotton et al., 2010)

²²⁰ These progressive indicators are reflected by surveys of US contractors (Petersohn, 2012), where the performance of western PMCs compared favourably to the conduct of local PMC's, local state forces and the US military. However, Fitzsimmons (2013:707) highlights the importance of 'culture' in the performance of US private military companies with companies demonstrating a highly 'military' orientation representing a greater risk than those with a less 'bellicose' culture.

(Leander, 2012, 2016a, 2016b). In this thesis I provide evidence that in functioning and semi-functioning markets, private security companies have had to alter their behavior to more defensive and less aggressive norms in order to maintain their commercial viability. While the long-term potential of this reformatory impetus remains to be seen, it could be argued that these nascent changes to conduct compare relatively favorably when set against the record of state military²²¹ and law enforcement institutions, both of which exhibit a potential resistance to cultural reform (Barton, 2003) that would appear difficult to sustain in a functioning commercial market. However, more comparative work in this respect is clearly needed to explore the veracity of this interpretation.

Security Acts and Security Constructions

Above all the study of private security provides us with the opportunity to examine security in its private, state and increasingly hybrid forms. The evidence of this thesis is that different 'security acts' have different qualities that engender different emotional responses in those carrying them out, and by extension, in those who become the objects of these acts. These qualities are certainly highly situational (Collins, 2008) but also have a strong subjective element; Craig rejected the idea of teaching game wardens bayonet fighting irrespective of situational factors; subjectively bayonet fighting was too aggressive to be compatible with civilian 'security' training. The preemptive patrolling of convoy routes in Iraq and the use of long-range crew served weapons in the Balkans caused practitioners similar misgivings (see Chapter 6). Conduct which involved aggression, pre-emption, was expansive or extra-geographical in nature, or that was conducted predominantly to meet the practitioners' own emotional needs, was more likely to be interpreted as 'entropic', i.e. contributing to the creation of disorder rather than coherence or stability. The more restrained and reciprocal the use-of-force employed by practitioners, and the greater proximity this had to the object of protection, the more likely the act of force was be interpreted as

²²¹ Farrell and Gordon (2009) demonstrate that, despite the reforms of the 1990s, the UK military's progress in counterinsurgency operations has been inconsistent. Dixon (2009) and Catignani, (2012) questioning the fundamental coherence of contemporary British counter Insurgency strategy, as does Ledwidge (2017) in *Losing Small Wars*.

creating security, and to maintain its value as a capital of exchange in the commercial field.

Irrespective of their true utility, offensive practices remained foundational to the conduct of the state organisations from which practitioners were drawn and formed a seemingly legitimate part of state security practice. Malešević (2017) notes that organised violence, while enacted at an interpersonal, level, is always the subject of 'organisational mediation' (Malešević, 2017:16), a strategic or political meta-narrative that provides a logic to the conflict in which the belligerents are engaged. That actions which were subjectively experienced as 'offensive' in nature were incorporated into our political and cultural construction of 'security' belied that fact that, subjectively they were experienced, by both object and subject as creating insecurity. Notwithstanding the 'organisational mediation' that sovereign exceptionalism represented, effective security 'capital' was created by the preparedness to sustain risk, or even loss, to support or assert a client's reality (or rights) without escalating to destabilising forms of offensive action. Thus preparedness to sustain the risk of injury or death was semiotically associated with security creation, but actual belligerence or confrontation with the creation of insecurity. Thus while expansive, proactive and aggressive uses-of-force may have a place in the war-fighting environment, we should not mistake them for contributing to 'security'.

Tentatively, the evidence of this thesis can be seen to provide an additional dimension to existing critical security theory that sees the contemporary social construction of 'security' as a co-production of security and insecurity (Bigo, 2001; 2014 and 2016). Indeed, this approach goes some way to expose our understanding of state-centric forms of 'security' as an example of Bourdieusian 'collective misrecognition' (Bourdieu, 1977:171) our cultural tolerance of the state's 'exceptionalism' allowing it to administer security and insecurity selectively. These distinctions may have utility across a range of disciplines engaging with security and policing policy where contemporary discourses surrounding 'security' appear to sustain and perpetuate conflict. These include such areas as conflict and development studies, where an era of interventionist foreign policy is seen to have created alternate forms of hegemony and insecurity

(Duffield, 2001); policing policy, where drug-market interventions may have exacerbated associated violence and social harm (Werb et al., 2011), as well as scholarship that is beginning to theorize how non-state and hybrid forms of security differ from their state-centric predecessors (Wilson and Bakker, 2016).

Private Military Security and Power

Challenging Boundaries and Selling Sovereignty

While the subjective needs of practitioners could be seen to drive the 'supply' side of market logic and field practice, the narratives of my interviewees provided some insight into demand side dynamics. The 'implicit promise' of reliability under duress implied by basic somatic 'fighting capital' did not fully explain the activity of former Special Forces operatives conducting covert surveillance in the, relatively benign, environment of central London. It became evident that service in Special Forces was itself an important currency. In Glen's words clients enjoyed having private recourse to their own 'secret service', a sovereign capacity usually reserved for states (Chapter 9). Here, clients were using the purchased command of the symbolic capital of the 'non-green army', those units empowered to act beyond the 'normal' codes of military and legal conduct, to provide them a means through which they could extend their capacity to control and dominate. The use of high-status former Special Forces operators served to annul the jarring incongruity caused by the use of highly invasive surveillance in (often relatively minor) civil disputes, and assuaged the sense of seedy prurience that might otherwise have been associated with the 'dirty work' of low-status private detectives.

In identifying the importance of the symbolic capital of elite military service, and the foundation of this capital in forms of state exceptionalism, its commercial and social significance came into focus. As post-Fordism and neoliberalism has changed the economic status quo, those best placed to create and seize the opportunities that the commodification of forms of military capital presented, were military actors whose 'unconventional' status allowed them to breach the existing social settlement, but remain 'beloved of the system' (Agambem, 2005). As Durkheim identified, transgression has always been a functional element of

societal change (Ben-Yehuda, 1985:7). This co-constitutive principle was given weight by evidence of the autonomy and license that these 'innovative' Special Forces units commanded, and the potential for transgression that this generated (Nichol, 2017; The Intercept, 2017; McKensie and Masters, 2018; Fence, 2020). The preeminent symbolism of Special Forces, in both the marketing of security services, and the repertoire of operational practices employed by the sector also brought into stark relief the tendency for this type of innovation to strain always towards the acceptance of more 'offensive' and dominating societal norms²²². Thus, in the development of private military security we can see how those whose military status afforded them the ability to legitimately challenge and transgress boundaries, became central to innovation in both the state and private realm. Special Forces acted as 'super-incubators' of boundary challenge (Liera 2016:38); constructed militarily as innovative unconventional thinkers and encompassing sovereign-like impunity in the popular imagination. The centrality of actors from Special Forces units to the development of the sector can therefore be seen as a function, not just of their military competence and expertise, but also of their ability to challenge boundaries and create new norms, both within and without the military.

The importance of symbolic capital was most evident in the 'fringes' of the private military security field (see Chapters 7 and 8). These areas were characterised by their encompassing secrecy and were dominated by practitioners with a Special Forces, or special intelligence background. In these areas activity that would, during the Cold War era, have been stigmatized as 'mercenary' was now being routinely conducted by corporately branded private security companies. These firms used the social and symbolic capital of their Special Forces affiliation to promote and legitimise their activity. In these fringe fields there was no evidence that developing regulatory standards or reputational concerns among client organisations worked to temper the harmful potential of this market. Instead it was clear that in these areas very offensive forms of state-like dominance were practiced commercially with little governance or constraint. In the international sphere this took the form of a complex territory of 'sanctioned transgression',

²²² See Cowan (2014: 5) on the 'trajectory of struggle' in global logistics.

where the deniable activities of the state (i.e. activity of such questionable political or ethical character that its conduct had to be kept from the public) was increasingly being outsourced to private entities²²³.

The engagement of private contractors in military training overseas had a history that extended back to the era of ‘the Circuit’. However, by 2015 the employment of former Special Forces operators to conduct military training that blurred the line between supporting and offensive military functions was becoming an established aspect of corporate private military security provision. Here the opaque nature of state ‘authorisation’, and obfuscated contracting arrangements, meant that commercial confidentiality supplanted traditional ‘national security safeguards’ (Kruck, 2014) and obviated mechanisms of oversight. These contracts were facilitated through the close personal relationships between middle and senior level managers in state intelligence, security and defence organisations, and practitioners of private security (i.e. their shared social capital). This was further reinforced by the trans migratory status of (former) members of Special Forces and special intelligence units, who may simultaneously have engaged in work in both commercial and state sectors. Thus, rather than affording governments less policy flexibility through the erosion of state capacities (de Nevers, 2016:171-172) the evidence of this study is that private military security provided governments with opportunities to act deniably in the foreign policy arena. Most significantly this highlighted that the involvement of private military security practitioners in training associated with Security Sector Reform (SSR) provided a rich milieu for deniable state foreign policy intervention, a practice that may extend some way beyond that recognized in existing literature²²⁴. In this context, it was perhaps unsurprising that where states had become involved in the regulation of private military security, this was seen to have served more to legitimise than control the activity of the sector (Leander, 2012).

²²³ See Chaffin (2004); Rothe (2006) and Mestrovic & Lorenzo (2008) on contract interrogators, Zabci (2007) and Spearin, (2007) on the involvement of private contractors in un-attributable military activity, Michalowski and Kramer (1990) and Jamieson and McEvoy, (2005) on ‘state crimes by proxy’, and Stanger (2009) on general foreign policy implications.

²²⁴ Contrast Kruck’s view that ‘activities outsourced by the British MoD focus on non-armed logistical support’ (Kruck 2014:127) with Kate’s narrative in Chapter 7.

Taken together the activity evident in ‘fringe’ areas of the UK private military security field was indicative that the ‘self-privatisation’ of the state described by Brodeur (2010) was well underway in the foreign policy sphere. The exceptional (and now transnational) practices of state ‘high policing’ (and their military ‘non-green army’ facsimile) evolving into a hybrid state/private form increasingly insulated from democratic control. The indicative evidence of this thesis is that, over time, we could anticipate these practices becoming normalised, particularly as UK national defence policy now envisages increased levels of transmigration between the state and private military/security sectors²²⁵. Ultimately, this has the potential to lead to a more ‘no holds barred’ (Kruck, 2014) approach to international relations. As such, state behavior in relation to private security, while not strictly criminal could certainly be considered socially and politically harmful. Indeed, the curation of a deniable special operations forces, both within and without the state, could be seen to involve the propagation forms of institutionalized deviance (Punch, 2012). Recognition that a small, but significant element of private military security work involves supporting the capacity of foreign paramilitary and security organisations to carry out offensive operations is significant. The ‘Janus faced’ nature of ‘security’ demonstrates that this type of action is often profoundly counterproductive and may create, or perpetuate instability and conflict (see Kate’s misgivings about the work she was offered in a country undergoing a significant ‘constitutional process’ – Chapter 7). Here the state’s capacity to use private actors to create both security and insecurity; the consequences of which can be cohering or entropic; beneficial or harmful is evident.

By identifying the impact of state-like practices through their interpretation as capital we can better understand the social consequence of this conduct unfiltered by the often-distorting lens of politics or jurisprudence. This less normative approach is best illustrated by Craig’s statement in Chapter 4, where he candidly highlights the intrinsic character of practices carried out by Special Forces operators on behalf of the exceptional state, ‘what is SOE if not a terrorist

²²⁵ See sections 1.15, 4.52-4.53 and 4.56 of the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence Review 2015 (HM Government, 2015) and Ares&Athena, (2017).

organisation?'. This approach contributes to literature that is beginning to look at war and conflict through the prism of deviance (Walklate and McGary, 2015: Lea 2015) by demonstrating that that acts undertaken in the name of sovereign exceptionalism (and exempt from the label of criminality), may be as socially harmful, and objectively deviant when enacted by the state as by private actors. Thus, the increasingly ambiguous position of the state, both in the conduct of its officials and the direction of neoliberal political culture and strategy, requires us to question its centrality to private security sector governance (Shearing and Stenning, 2016:146) and reinforces the need to rethink security practices in a manner that does not privilege state-like approaches.

Changing the Nature of Sovereignty

It is perhaps unsurprising that, as the traditional monopoly of state power has been eroded (Harvey, 2005) or restructured (Rose and Miller, 2008) by neoliberalism, the symbolic capital of state-like exceptionalism, should be identified as having a value to emergent private and corporate elites. In this manner we can conceive of military private security as commodifying not only the state's capacities, but also its symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991). Increasingly those with access to economic capital can buy the trappings of sovereignty and extend their ability to dominate into spheres where previously only the state was able to act and then only under conditions of great exigency. In this, military style private security can be seen to drive the move towards greater corporate and in some cases individual sovereignty. The elite groups, newly empowered by commercial access to the practices and techniques of the exceptional state, acquire the ability to challenge and re-cast social norms through the illocutionary force (Bourdieu 1991: 74-75) this purchased symbolic capital confers. In the international sphere, in weak states, this allows private companies to challenge the state's monopoly on physical force by appropriating military or policing functions, up to and including 'war fighting' (as illustrated by Pete's involvement in anti Boko Haram operations in Nigeria – Chapter 7). In developed political economies, areas of practice where the existing social settlement was un-codified have become the focus. In the case of UK covert surveillance, where transparency was limited and regulatory control deficient, practices have developed that

provide elite clients the opportunity to adopt the 'offensive' capacity to create insecurity for their commercial or personal adversaries. This is done using techniques drawn from the state's fight against terrorism. In this they adopt a state-like capacity to dominate those who fall within their orbit.

Through this type of analysis, we can conceive of private security studies as a 'petri dish' in which we may examine the nature of the security act in circumstances at least partially removed from the assumed legitimacy of the state. This allows the researcher a limited 'liberation from the theoretical privilege of sovereignty' (Foucault in Agamben, 1998:5). Conversely, by examining the intrinsic nature of security, as employed by both state and private actors, we can reinterpret the nature of sovereign power free of its own assumptions. The 'ecstasy belonging' described by Agamben as the 'topology of the 'state of exception'' (2005: 35), that is the ability to break the rules but remain beloved of the system, can in fact be seen to underpin 'elitism' in all its forms. The elite military actor is permitted to depart from institutional and legal conventions in much the same way as the drug taking of rock stars is treated with indulgence, and the wealthy permitted to procure 'sweetheart deals' on their taxes. Exception, per se. is not the unique preserve of the sovereign state but instead that of elites in all their forms. The maintenance of 'elite' status has always involved the purchase and employment of 'defensive' security to protect property, autonomy and privilege. The sovereign actor by contrast employs offensive modes of control to enforce a change of social reality more expansively. Thus sovereignty is not simply the ability to breach the social settlement without rejection, but to challenge and achieve dominance over competing norms (by force if necessary) while still maintaining one's place in the social community. The 'high policing' private security actor is one means through which the symbolic power of the sovereign is transferred and manifest in new hybrid structures of power, and the distinction between the 'elite' and the 'sovereign' conflated and transformed.

When taken together, the importance of elite exceptionalism in all its forms provides us with perhaps the clearest indication of the 'regressive' capacity of private military security. As neoliberalism has created new actors in the 'field of power', the private security industry is increasingly selling the trappings of state

to the new nobility. Through this, corporate chiefs and high net worth actors are able to accumulate symbolic power, or the 'power to secure the recognition of power' (Bourdieu, 1990: p131) and, in so doing adopt an increasingly sovereign status within the system of globalized corporate capitalism. In this the commodification of state security can be seen to give rise to highly iniquitous forms of private government and authority, (Bayley and Shearing's, 1996; Hall and Bierstecker 2002). That the 'high policing' practices of the exceptional state now have the ability to manifest in the private as well as the public sphere (O' Reilly and Ellison, 2006; O'Reilly, 2015:26) provides evidence of the creation of reactionary, hybrid, forms of sovereignty where access to economic capital is replacing state centric concepts of 'common good' (Brodeur, 2010:289) as the legitimate foundation of sovereign capacity.

Conclusion

This thesis has provided an analysis of the experience of a group of people engaged in what they perceived to be a community of work. This community was formed around a network of relationships created and maintained through the collective solidarity generated by military service. The community had a history, boundaries to membership and an internal logic that was, more or less shared. Through an examination of the way that this community was understood by its members, I have described a field of private military security; a complex social-space that formed the nexus of a range of often competing factors. Many of these factors are reflected in the literatures of private security. However, to date, the complexity and evolving nature of the sector means that it has proved stubbornly resistant to classification. This work provides evidence that, underlying this complexity there are unifying characteristics that give logic to parts of the sector. Private military security is the area within a broader security market in which individuals possessing military capital seek to exchange these tradable capacities for other forms of capital. For participants, the field is not defined by distinctions between different forms of service provision (Hakala, 2010; Bearpark and Schultz 2007:241) or types of clients (Kinsey, 2006) so much as it coheres around the joint endeavour of perpetuating and commodifying military forms of behaviour. This is done not simply for financial gain, but for the opportunity to continue

experiencing the emotional fulfilment associated with the enactment of that capital.

The examination of private military security as a field in which these unique forms of capital are exchanged, progresses our ability to understand how and why markets for private military services emerge, and how they respond to the logic of the civilian fields with which they integrate. In the semi-functioning security market in Iraq, over time, client organisations (state and private) oriented their purchasing away from the commission of companies engaged in the more dominant and geographically unbridled forms of security provision. This was the result of a number of factors that included risk-aversion and reputational consciousness, as well as practical evidence of the efficacy of offensive military capital in the creation of environments where commerce could flourish. However, this evolution only occurred where transgression was visible and clients suffered the direct consequences of the conduct of their security providers. In this respect the evidence of this thesis is mixed; functionalist theories that the privatisation of state security can provide greater flexibility and adaptability while also maintaining the rights based standards of civil society (Brooks, 2000), can be sustained, but only in a limited sense. In those fringes of the field where transparency was most lacking there was little evidence that existing international regulation did any more than legitimise highly contentious practices. Thus, conduct in the field was tempered more by the interests of economic capital than by regulation, but only where transparency influenced the behaviour of clients. Nonetheless, even these 'middle market' sectors could be argued to 'settle' at a more militarised norm as military style practices were incorporated into the logic of formerly civilian fields.

The centrality of forms of military capital, based on conditioned emotional reliability, to participation in the private military security field allows us to develop our thinking beyond traditional areas of discourse. There is surprising evidence contained in this study that financial reward is frequently a secondary motivation for engagement in the sector. Indeed the desire to derive emotional fulfilment from the recreation of the military habitus predominates. This aligns with other studies of US contractors (Franke, Von Boemcken, 2011) and takes us

beyond existing concerns over the juxtaposition of force and private profit. By establishing the link between the resilience of the military habitus with its underpinning masculinity and emphasis on dominating offensive action, the 'strain' associated with civil-military transition caused often by the tension between the 'warrior culture' of the military sub-unit and the containing logic of the broader military institution, and the structural propensity this creates for the proliferation of highly aggressive state-like cultures in the civil realm, we can move away from more binary public/private analytical paradigms. In turn, this provides a basis for further study of the liminalities created by the proliferation of these state-like practices, and the forms of 'hybrid sovereignty', with a locus across traditional public and private realms, to which they give rise. Beyond this, the study promotes an understanding of security that differentiates the state-like functions of 'dominance' from those more restrained, defensive actions that create the stability and safety necessary for commerce, and society, to function. In so doing, we are better able to understand the contradictions inherent in our contemporary construction of 'security' both in terms of its practical effect and its semiotic potential.

While there was some evidence that, in the more transparent 'middle market' of military private security, a transition away from state-like thinking was underway, this impetus was only superficially superimposed over a core professional identity that remained symbiotically linked to the symbolic authority of the nation state. It was this culture of security that dominated the more regressive 'fringe' areas of the field, with the active connivance of both state and private patrons, who sought to benefit from the autonomy and symbolic power this afforded them. Through this, state foreign policy and intelligence elites could be seen to 'privatise' their sphere of practice, impeding oversight and adopting more autonomous, and more aggressive capabilities. Simultaneously the commodification of the capacities of the 'exceptional state' provided non-state elites with the symbolic power of the sovereign actor; the ability to challenge boundaries and change the social settlement while still remaining 'beloved' by the system. This could be seen to change the basis of the legitimate exercise of sovereignty from that of the representative embodiment of 'common good' to the simple possession of

economic capital; a direction of travel that certainly highlights the regressive potential of the sector.

The evidence of this thesis is less that we are returning to an era of structured company sovereigns (Philips, 2016) than advancing towards an society of fluid competing elites; private corporations and individuals, but also self-privatised elements of the state, who can purchase the symbolic trappings and substantive capacities of the sovereign actor. The most pessimistic prognosis is that, in international territory, this will see a continued dilution of the link between the legitimate use of violent force and forms of democratic control and representation. This has the capacity see both public and private bodies adopt, and normalise, more 'offensive' modes of conduct, albeit conduct that is limited to the type of low-intensity conflict sustainable by private companies, consultants and proxy forces. In developed economies corporate elites and wealthy individuals will seek to extend their control into areas that fall between or beyond the mechanisms of formal state supervision or civil society scrutiny. Here, those with access to economic capital can use the symbolic power of purchased sovereignty to legitimate the use of techniques developed by the executors of the state's exceptional prerogatives. By so doing they extend their capacity to exercise control over society. In parallel the self-privatised elites of the state bureaucracy can take full advantage of the capacity for surveillance and control that hybridization with the private sector can provide. Thus, security privatisation creates a convergence between the offensive norms of state security and the normative practices of the civil sphere. In this, the private security actor is a willing participant, assuaging the anomie of their separation from the state, and papering over the ethical contradictions of their work using constructions of 'professionalism', craft and artistry to maintain the morally boundaried condition of state service. A foreseeable outcome is that the condition of 'civil society' inexorably moves towards a more unstable, intrusive and authoritarian norm.

Accepting the premise with which I began, that private security is 'here to stay', this thesis has implications for how we control and govern these new and hybrid fields of security. The security 'act' is frequently performed in environments of conflict or under conditions of secrecy. In these circumstances objective forms of

control are difficult to implement and monitor. The key to achieving successful governance of security may therefore lie in conditioning the subjective dispositions of the security practitioner's habitus. The tension inherent between the emotional incentives created by the inculcation of competence in physical violence, and the expectation that this competence will only be exercised in extremis and not used offensively, sits at the heart of both security identity and practice. It is no accident that, in the more progressive areas of the private military security field, operational experience in the more nuanced and constrained discipline of 'stability support' is now required. Nonetheless the challenge of creating private security cultures that eclipse the embodied offensive instinct of military service remains significant. This interpretation favours private military security being used for tasks involving less discretion and with firmer controls placed over geographical exploitation. However, it is difficult to conceive that the private provision of force is, in the future, to be limited to this less autonomous norm. Given this, a reinterpretation of the professional identity of the private security contractor is key. The creation of a body of practice, differentiated from the normative logic of the state, that re-invents the identity of the private security actor as distinct from its state antecedent, and that embodies a new and different conceptualisation of security is imperative.

Appendix A

Interviewee Sample, Background and Employment Profile.

Participant	Name ²²⁶	Former Experience	Private Security Experience	Interviews
1	Allan	Non Commissioned Officer in a Commando Engineer Regiment.	Security and de-mining in UK, Eurasia and the Middle East	1
2	Dan	Senior Non Commissioned Officer in the 22 nd SAS Regiment	Security operations, consultancy and training in UK, Africa and the Middle East	2
3	Craig	Senior Non Commissioned Officer in the 22 nd SAS Regiment	Security operations, consultancy and training in Oman, Libya, the Middle East, Pakistan, Kashmir, Kenya and Algeria and UK	2
4	Jack	Senior Non Commissioned Officer in the 22 nd SAS Regiment	Security operations, consultancy and training in the Middle East, Africa, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq and UK	2
5	Arron	Senior Non Commissioned Officer in the 22 nd SAS Regiment	Security operations and consultancy in Iraq and Afghanistan	1
6	Ian	Senior Non Commissioned Officer in the 22 nd SAS Regiment	Security management and consultancy in the UK, the Middle East and Africa	1
7	Victor	Senior Non Commissioned Officer in the 22 nd SAS Regiment	Security operations, consultancy and training in UK, Africa, Pakistan, Russia and Iraq	2
8	Andrew	Senior Non Commissioned Officer in the Intelligence Corps. Special Intelligence Operator in Northern Ireland	Security operations, consultancy and training in UK, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia and Africa	2
9	Stuart	Senior Non Commissioned Officer in Infantry	Security consultancy, training and surveillance in the UK Europe, Africa and the Middle East	1

²²⁶ Not real names.

		and Special Forces Surveillance Operator in Northern Ireland		
10	George	Police Officer in a UK Police paramilitary counter-terrorism unit	Security training and consultancy in the UK	1
11	Terry	Parachute Regiment soldier with experience in Iraq and Afghanistan	Close protection in the UK and Iraq.	1
12	David	Royal Marine Non Commissioned Officer with experience in Northern Ireland	Maritime Security and commercial business development	1
13	James	Police counter-terrorism officer in a United Kingdom dependent territory	Security operations and Kidnap Ransom and Extortion Consultancy in UK and overseas	1
14	Roger	Commissioned Officer British Army Armoured Corps ²²⁷	Contract military work in the Middle East, Military and security consultancy for transnational organisations, security consultancy and management in Africa, senior executive in a number of multinational security companies	1
15	Ethan	Infantry soldier in the South African Defence Force and Royal Marine Non Commissioned Officer with experience in specialist intelligence	Security operations, Kidnap Ransom and Extortion Consultancy and training in UK and overseas	1
16	Mike	Chartered accountant and corporate executive in the international oil and gas industry	Senior executive and non-executive posts in a number of multinational security and risk management companies	1
17	Lawrence	Commissioned Officer in UK Airborne Forces ²²⁸	Business development and client Relations for a maritime security company	1
18	Ross	Non Commissioned Officer in UK Special Forces Service with the United Kingdom police.	Security training and consultancy in the UK	1

²²⁷ The Armoured Corps employs tanks and other armoured vehicles to carry out its role.

²²⁸ Airborne forces are soldiers who undertake training in military parachuting. This comprises the Parachute Regiment and associated supporting units. (i.e. airborne engineers, artillery etc.)

19	Pete	Service the UK, Rhodesian and South African military including in Special Forces units	Security and military training, consultancy, management and operations in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and UK	1
20	Nick	Non Commissioned Officer in the 22 nd SAS Regiment	Security management and consultancy in the UK, Middle East and Africa	1
21	Nigel	Non Commissioned Officer in the United Kingdom Infantry	Close protection and security management in the UK and Middle East	1
22	John	Non Commissioned Officer in UK Airborne Forces with experience in the Falklands and Northern Ireland	Security provision and EOD in the Middle East	2
23	Ryan	Non Commissioned Officer in the 22 nd SAS Regiment	Close protection and security consultancy and training in the UK and overseas	2
24	William	British Army senior Commissioned Officer in UK Armoured Corps	Chief executive of a recruitment firm placing former military candidates in commercial industries (including private security)	1
25	Glen	UK security/intelligence organisation	Security consultancy, surveillance and investigations in the UK and abroad	1
26	Kate	Commissioned Officer British Army, service in UK Special Forces and UK security/intelligence organisation	Security consultancy in UK, Middle East, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe	1
27	Adam	Non Commissioned Officer Commonwealth military. Service in Commonwealth security/intelligence organisation	Surveillance and investigations in UK and overseas	1
28	Gary	Non Commissioned Officer in UK Special Forces (reserve), regular Airborne unit.	De-Mining/EOD, security management and operations in Iraq, Eastern Europe, Balkans, Asia and UK	1
29	Kevin	Non Commissioned Officer in TA Parachute Regiment	Security management, operations, close protection and consultancy in UK and overseas	1

30	Colin	Commissioned officer in British Army Infantry. Service in Northern Ireland, Balkans and Iraq	Security management, consultancy and close protection operations in Middle east, Africa and UK	1
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Appendix B

Interview Schedule and Questions.

The Chart below details the schedule of interview's I conducted for this thesis and the topics that were discussed. The second part of this appendix contains examples of the outline of questions I used at different stages in the study.

Serial	Interviewee ²²⁹	Topics Covered
1.	Allan	Career history Private security sector construction/constitution Experiences of work in the private security sector Close protection, security management, consultancy, covert surveillance, explosive ordinance demolitions operations Boundaries and Control Normative and transgressive sector practices
2.	Craig	Career history History of UK private military sector Private security sector construction/constitution Special Forces role in sector construction Transitioning experiences Experiences of private security during circuit era and post War on Terror Training, close protection, security consultancy, Protective security operations Boundaries, control and decision making
3.	Arron	Career history Construction of the private security sector Armed protective security in Iraq Military culture and identity in private security Special Forces experience and culture Boundaries, control and decision making Normative and transgressive conduct in private security
4.	Dan	Career history Transitioning experience Construction of UK private security sector Experiences of the private security sector Security consultancy work Boundaries and decisions in professional conduct
5.	Stuart Doc	Career history Transitioning experiences Experiences of private security Covert surveillance operations

²²⁹ Not interviewees real names

		<p>Military experience and culture</p> <p>Special Forces culture and identity</p> <p>Boundaries and decisions in professional conduct</p> <p>Construction of normative and transgressive field practice</p> <p>Security clients and purchasing</p>
6.	Ian	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experience</p> <p>Protective security, security management, consultancy and training operations (domestic and international environments)</p> <p>Boundaries and decision making</p> <p>Military culture and experience</p>
7.	Victor	<p>Career history</p> <p>Experiences of private security during circuit era and post War on Terror</p> <p>Protective security, security consultancy, training, covert surveillance operations</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Special Forces culture and identity</p> <p>Boundaries and decision making</p> <p>Construction of normative and transgressive practice</p>
8.	Andrew	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Covert surveillance, protective security and consultancy operations</p> <p>Special intelligence culture and experience</p> <p>Boundaries, controls and decision making</p> <p>Normative and transgressive practices</p> <p>Security purchasing decisions</p>
9.	George	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Security training and consultancy operations</p> <p>Sector construction</p> <p>Police experience and culture</p> <p>Military/state cultures in private security</p> <p>Working with military people and Special Forces</p>
10.	Ross	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Military culture and identity</p> <p>Police experience and culture</p> <p>Special Forces culture and identity</p> <p>Military culture in private security</p>
11.	Ryan	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Private security experience</p> <p>Close protection, security consultancy, Kidnap and Ransom and covert surveillance and training operations</p>

		<p>Sector constitution/construction</p> <p>Military experiences</p> <p>Boundaries and decision making</p> <p>Control and regulation</p>
12.	Mike	<p>Career history</p> <p>Construction and history of UK private military security field</p> <p>Commercial practices and sector evolution</p> <p>Normative and transgressive sector practices</p> <p>Control governance and evolution of private security field</p> <p>Working with military people</p> <p>Military culture in private security</p> <p>Elite military culture and identity in private security</p>
13.	Dan	<p>Private security experiences</p> <p>Security consultancy work</p> <p>Boundaries and control</p> <p>Regulation, governance and ethics</p> <p>Special Forces culture and influence</p>
14.	Jack	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experience</p> <p>Experiences of private security in the circuit era</p> <p>Special Forces culture and identity</p> <p>State and commercial hybridity in private security</p> <p>Boundaries and control</p> <p>Normative and transgressive practices</p>
15.	Roger	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>History and constitution of UK private military security field</p> <p>Sector clients</p> <p>Ethics and Governance of private security</p> <p>Boundaries and decision making</p> <p>Sector recruitment</p> <p>Normative and transgressive sector practice</p> <p>Military identity in private security</p> <p>Elite military identity in private security</p>
16.	Ethan	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Security training, consultancy, kidnap Ransom and Extortion consultancy operations</p> <p>Military identity and culture</p> <p>Special Forces culture and identity in Private security</p>
17.	Andrew	<p>Construction/constitution of private military security field</p> <p>Military culture and identity in private security</p> <p>Covert surveillance operations</p> <p>Sector clients and purchasing decisions</p>
18.	Terry	<p>Career history</p>

		<p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Experiences of private security UK and overseas</p> <p>Close protection and armed protective security</p> <p>Boundaries and decision making</p> <p>Elite military identity and military culture in private security</p>
19.	Lawrence	<p>Career History</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>History of maritime security sector</p> <p>Business practices in maritime security</p> <p>Maritime security operations</p> <p>Elite military identity in private security</p> <p>Sector commercial conduct</p> <p>Normative and transgressive practices</p> <p>Control and governance</p>
20.	James	<p>Career history</p> <p>Entry to private security sector</p> <p>Private military security field construction</p> <p>Kidnap Ransom and Extortion, consultancy, training and</p> <p>Maritime security operations</p> <p>Working with military people</p> <p>Police experience and culture</p> <p>State and military identity and culture in private security</p> <p>Normative and transgressive sector practices</p> <p>Control and governance</p>
21.	Ryan	<p>UK private military security field construction/constitution</p> <p>Close protection, training and security consultancy sub-fields</p> <p>UK regulation and governance</p> <p>Military and Special Forces culture/identity</p> <p>Control and governance</p> <p>Boundaries and transgression</p>
22.	Craig	<p>Private security experiences</p> <p>Private military security field construction</p> <p>Boundaries and decision making</p> <p>Normative and transgressive sector practices</p>
23.	Victor	<p>Private security experiences</p> <p>Private military security field construction</p> <p>Boundaries and control</p> <p>Military experiences</p> <p>Transgressive and normative sector practices</p>
24.	Focus Group 1 Viktor Craig	<p>Field constitution/construction and defining dynamics</p> <p>Motivations for participation and transition</p> <p>Military cultures in private security</p> <p>Transgressive/normative practices,</p> <p>Offensive and protective security practices</p>
25.	William	<p>Career history</p>

		<p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Security sector recruitment</p> <p>Security sector clients and purchasing decisions</p> <p>Military culture in civilian/commercial employment</p> <p>Private military security field construction</p>
26.	David	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p> <p>Maritime security sub-field</p> <p>Governance and control</p> <p>Boundaries and decision making in maritime security</p> <p>Control and governance in maritime security operations</p> <p>Private military security field construction</p>
27.	Pete	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experience</p> <p>Military experiences</p> <p>Private security experiences</p> <p>Protective security, security management, close protection, consultancy, private military operations</p> <p>Boundaries and decision making</p> <p>Fringe sub-field, private military training/operations</p> <p>Sub-field recruitment practices</p> <p>Security clients and purchasing</p>
28.	Jack	<p>Normative and transgressive sector practice</p> <p>Security consultancy and training operations</p> <p>Fringe sub-field, private military training/operations</p> <p>Sector clients and purchasing decisions</p>
29.	Nick	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experience</p> <p>Military experiences</p> <p>Private military security field and constitution/ construction</p> <p>Security consultancy, protective security, training operations</p> <p>Military culture and identity in private security</p> <p>Security recruitment practices</p> <p>Governance and control</p> <p>Special Forces culture and identity</p> <p>Sector clients and purchasing decisions</p>
30.	Nigel	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experience</p> <p>Military experience and culture</p> <p>Close protection, protective security and maritime security operations</p> <p>Elite and Special Forces culture in military private security</p>
31.	John	<p>Career history</p> <p>Transitioning experiences</p>

		Explosive ordinance demolitions, protective security, close protection operations Private military security field construction Military culture in private security Elite military culture and identity Boundaries and decision making Normative and transgressive sector practices
32.	Glen	Career history Transitioning experience Construction of covert surveillance sub-field Military identity and culture State identities in private security Boundaries and decision making Normative and transgressive conduct Security clients and purchasing
33.	John	Private military security field constitution/construction Fringe sub-fields
34.	Kate	Career history Transitioning experiences/transmigration Private military security field construction Fringe sub-fields, private military training/operations and covert surveillance Special Forces identity and culture Gender in military service and private security Boundaries, transgression and military culture
35.	Adam	Career History Transitioning/transmigration experiences Covert surveillance sub-field Working with military people Military culture in private security Boundaries and decision making State identities in private security Governance and control Normative and transgressive sector practices Sector clients and purchasing decisions
36.	Gary	Career history Transition/transmigration experience Explosive ordinance disposal, protective security, close protection, covert surveillance, private military operations Fringe sub-fields Elite military culture and identity Transgressive/normative sector practices Sector clients and purchasing decisions
37.	Focus Group 2 Nigel John Gary	Field constitution/construction and defining dynamics Motivations for participation and transition/transmigration Military cultures in private security

	Allan	Transgressive and normative sector practices Constructions of offensive and protective security Fringe sub-fields Sector clients and purchasing decisions
38.	Kevin Neal	Career history Transitioning experience Private security experiences Protective security, close protection, maritime security operations Private military security construction and history Normative and transgressive practices in the sector Working with military people Elite military culture in private security Fringe sub-fields
39.	Colin	Career history Transitioning experiences Private military security field constitution/construction Security consultancy protective security and close protection operations Sector clients
40.	Focus Group 3 Andrew Adam Colin Nick	Field constitution/construction and defining dynamics Motivations for participation and transition/transmigration Military cultures in private security Transgressive/normative practices Constructions of offensive and protective security Fringe sub-fields Sector clients and purchasing decisions

* Not interviewees' real names

Development of Interview Questions at Different Stages in the Study

As the study developed the outline of questions that I used for interviews changed. Below is a sample of my outline of interview questions at different stages of the study. The format below was not rigid; my questions were altered for different participants with whom I wished to focus on specific topics. Additionally, within the context of the interview wide discretion was provided for interviewees to discuss subject matter that they felt was significant.

Example of questions used during the early period of the study

Below are the groups of questions drawn from my research notes that I used to structure my initial interviews from approximately first quarter 2013 to early 2014. These questions were based on my initial research aims:

Q1. Describe in own words your career in private security.

Q2. Describe the work you conduct in the private security field

How big is the sector?

Where is work conducted?

How many actors?

What is their background?

What is the nature of the work conducted in the sector?

Who are the sector's clients?

Q3. How do you see your role in private security?

What is your experience of work in the private security sector?

What does an average day of work for you entail for you?

What factors influence or control your conduct and decisions, and across the sector more broadly?

Contracts

Supervision

Procedures

Professional standards

Social expectations

Regulation

How do you perceive the role of your work in society?

How do you think society perceives your work/role?

What do you think about that?

Q4. Boundaries normative and deviant/transgressive practice

Is there a good/bad side to the sector?

Are there things that you would not be prepared to do?

Are these boundaries absolute or have they changed/developed over time?

How do you decide what you are prepared to do and what you won't do?

Might others be prepared to do things that you would not?

Why might other practitioners/companies be prepared to do this?

Example of questions used during the middle period of the Study

Below are examples drawn from my research notes of groups of questions I used to structure my interviews as I developed the themes and categories that emerged from my selective/axial coding. These questions were developed and used from approximately early 2014 until early 2016:

Q1. Constructing the field of private security

- Can you describe the field of security in which you work?
- How big is the field?
- Has the field changed over time? If so, how?
- What activity does the field encompass?
- Who participates in the field? Why do they participate and what do they do?
- What determines entry to, and participation in, the field/sub/field?
- How do different groups in society interact with the private security field (or specific sub-fields)?

Q2. Military culture, identity and capital – nature and significance

- What was your experience of military service?
- Is military culture unified/homogenous or are there different cultures in the military? If there are, what are these different cultures? Can you give examples?
- Was your military service relevant to your move to private security? If so, how and why was military service relevant to private security?
- Does military service differ from civilian work/life? If so, how?
- Does military service differ from private security work? If so, how?
- What negative or positive effects does military service have on the conduct and practice of private security practitioners?

Q3. Transitioning experiences – how and why do some service people transition to private security?

- Why did you leave the military?
- What was your experience of leaving the military and moving to civilian employment?
- What was your experience of civilian employment? Did it differ from life in the military? If so, how?
- How and why did you become involved with private security?
- Why did you choose to become involved in [the type of security work you conduct]?

Q4. Boundaries, normative and transgressive Practice

- How do you make decisions about what practices, behaviours and conduct are acceptable in private security and which are not? Can you give examples?
- What factors influence or give structure to your decisions about what is acceptable and unacceptable practice?
- To what extent is regulation significant in the decisions you make in private security work?

What are the most significant factors, structures or experience that you use to make decisions in private security?
If differences in practice exist in different parts of the field, or between different field participants, what are these?
Are there types of work, or areas of the field that you would not work in, if so why?

Q5. State identity and private security practice

How do you think your experience of the military differs from that in private security?
Does the [private security] job feel different from working in the military? If so, how and why does it differ? Can you give examples?
Are there similarities between private security work and service in the military? If so, what are these similarities? Can you give examples?
Are there things that you would have done in the military that you will not/cannot do in the private sector? If so, why?
Have you been offered work that you understood to be illegal or unethical; did you refuse this work or agree to it? What influenced this decision?
Does military culture manifest itself in private security, if so, how and why?

Example of questions used during the latter period of the study

Below are examples of questions drawn from my research notes that I began to develop and used in late 2015 and early 2016. During this latter stage of the study existing data was being triangulated and emergent theories tested. These questions were used in both latter stage interviews and for the second and third focus group conducted in the second and fourth quarter of 2016:

Q1. Field structure and dynamics

What is the scope and extent of the field in which you work?
If this field changed or developed over time, how has it changed and when did these changes take place?
What are the significant events or dynamics that have influenced this?
How many people have participated in the field during these different periods
What areas of activity/practice do practitioners in the field conduct?
Is domestic covert surveillance part of the private military security field?
If not, does it form part of a different field of security practice?
Are business intelligence and investigations services part of the private military security field? If they are, where do they fit within the structure of the field? Who participates in this activity and how do they enter this field?
Are offensive military operations involving combat part of the private military security field? Who participates in this activity and how do they enter this field?

Q2. Capital and field participation

What skills/experience or capacities allow access to the field and/or relevant sub/fields?

Is military service a significant factor in field participation? If so, why?
How and why are non-military people involved in the field?
How important is financial reward as a motivating factor for participation in private military security work?
Why do only some ex-military people choose work in military private security?
What are the differences between those who choose to work in private military security and those who do not make that choice?

Q3. Military culture, identity and field capital

Is military culture and experience a significant factor in the type of private security work you conduct?
If so, which military cultures, experience or practice have most influence on conduct and practice in private military security?
Do non-military cultures and experience determine conduct and practice within the field in which you work? If so what are these cultures and experience and how significant are they?
Is service in Special Forces or elite military units a significant factor in field participation? If so, why?

Q4. Field conduct and practice

Does the profit motive create moral and ethical hazards in the sector? If so, what are these hazards? Can you give examples?
What role does international regulation, or codes of conduct, play in your operational decision-making?
Does service in Special Forces or other elite military units influence conduct or practice in private security? If it does, how does it influence conduct/practice? Can you give examples?
Do you think that the private security sector has areas where conduct is less ethical, more legally ambiguous or less socially acceptable? If so what are these areas?
Would you make a distinction between defensive operations from offensive operations? How would you differentiate these functions? Can you provide examples?
Have attitudes towards the conduct of combat activity by private companies changed/developed over time, societally and within the field? If so, can you describe this change and give examples? What factors have influenced this change?

Q5. Security purchasing and implications

Who buys private military security services? Has this changed or developed over time? If so, can you describe this change and give examples?
Why do client organisations and individuals hire private military security services? What do they seek to achieve by purchasing private military security services?

Appendix C

Study Sheet

The purpose of this study is to capture the experiences of people active in the private security industry. It will aim to provide a sociological perspective of the actors involved in this industry that will inform academic understanding of this phenomenon and provide a basis for analysis conducted in a PhD thesis. This research will address:

1. The career history of the participants involvement with the private security industry
2. The participant's perception of the nature of the private security work including the structure, governance and control of the sector and the type of activity conducted within it
3. Factors that the participant considered informed or controlled their decision making when in private security employment

In order to elicit your views I would like to conduct an in-depth interview with you into your experiences of the private security industry. If you agree, this interview will be audio recorded. This audio recording will be used to produce a transcript of the interview. In this transcript your name, and the names of other individuals will be anonymised where appropriate, and as you request. The names of companies and legal entities will be anonymised where reasonably possible and in all cases where you request they are so. This transcript will be used as a material source for the final PhD thesis and elements reproduced in the thesis.

This study does not require, and does not seek, to elicit details of times, dates organisations and personalities to achieve its research aims, although you are free to provide these should you so wish.

The PhD thesis will be a publicly available document and will be lodged in the LSE library. You will be given the opportunity to view and authorise the inclusion of any material that you have provided that could be considered sensitive or prejudicial in the final PhD thesis. If you are unhappy with the inclusion of this material you can, without prejudice, request that it be withdrawn from the published document.

The audio record and transcript of this interview will not be made publicly available. These documents will be held securely and will not be transferred to persons beyond those directly involved in the production and supervision of this thesis. Your identity as a research participant will be maintained in the strictest confidence. I will not, unless legitimately compelled so to do by a properly constituted investigation, pass on to any legal authority details of your identity or anything incriminating that you might tell me in the course of this research.

I would like to thank you for taking part in this study.

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WC2A 2AE

Combat-stress helpline 0800 138 1619
Email: contactus@combatstress.org.uk

Informed Consent Form

I, The undersigned, have read and understood the study sheet provided.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that taking part in the study will include being interviewed and audio recorded.

I have been given adequate time to consider my decision to take part in the study.

I understand that my personal details, such as name and employer address will not be revealed to people outside the study.

I understand that my words may be quoted in a PhD thesis document to be made publicly available via the London School of Economics and Political Science. I understand that my name will not be included in this document unless I request that it be so.

I understand that all reasonable efforts will be made to anonymise names, places, companies, agencies and other entities identified in this study and that these will be anonymised in all cases that I request they are so.

I understand that all preparatory materials related to this study will be stored securely.

I understand that in the event that part of this interview is reproduced for the purposes of publication I will be contacted to provide my authorisation for the publication of any sensitive or prejudicial information discussed during this interview.

I understand that I will be provided with a transcript of this interview should I request one.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked questions about why I no longer wish to take part.

Signature _____
Name (please print) _____
Date _____

Appendix D – Sub-field Construction

Participant	Former Experience	International Field										Domestic Field							
		CP	PS	PM	SC	CS	KR	TR	MA	CB	CC	CP	PS	SC	CS	KR	TR	CB	CC
1	Military, NCO	x	x		x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x			x	
2	Military, NCO, SF					x		x		x				x			x		
3	Military, NCO, SF, Commercial	x	x		x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x		x	x	
4	Military, NCO, SF	x	x		x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x		x	
5	Military, NCO, SF		x		x			x											
6	Military, NCO, SF		x		x								x	x					
7	Military, NCO, SF	x	x		x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
8	Military, NCO, SI	x	x		x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x		x	x	
9	Military, NCO, SF	x	x		x	x		x		x		x	x	x	x		x	x	
10	Police SU												x	x			x	x	
11	Military, NCO	x	x									x	x						
12	Military, NCO			x							x								
13	Police SU	x	x	x	x		x	x		x				x			x	x	
14	Military, Officer		x					x			x								x
15	Military, NCO, SI				x		x	x		x							x		
16	Commercial										x								x
17	Military, Officer, Commercial			x	x						x								x
18	Military, NCO, SF, Police													x			x	x	
19	Military, NCO, SF	x	x		x			x				x	x						
20	Military NCO, SF	x	x	x	x					x		x	x	x	x			x	
21	Military, NCO	x	x	x								x							
22	Military, NCO	x	x						x										
23	Military, NCO, SF	x	x		x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x			x	x	
24	Military, Officer, Commercial										x								x
25	Int/Sec				x	x		x		x				x			x		
26	Military, Officer, SF, Int/Sec	x	x		x	x	x	x		x				x			x	x	
27	Military, NCO, Int/Sec				x	x				x				x	x			x	
28	Military, NCO, SF	x	x		x		x		x			x	x	x			x		
29	Military (territorial) NCO,	x	x	x		x			x				x	x					
30	Military, Officer	x	x		x						x	x		x					x

Subfield Constitution Chart

The matrix above shows the experience of participants to the study, their experience prior to entering the private security field and the sub-field of activity that the author has been able to identify them as involved with during their private security careers. These subfields are divided between ‘international’ fields, where the activity is conducted beyond the borders of the United Kingdom and ‘domestic’ fields within the United Kingdom. Some subfields, such as ‘mine action and explosive Ordinance Demolition’ (MA)²³⁰ and ‘maritime protective security’ (PM) have been excluded from the domestic section, as no substantive industry of this type exists within the United Kingdom.

Former Experience Key

Code	Description
Military	The participant has served in the military
NCO	The participant held a non-commissioned rank in the military
Officer	The participant held a commissioned rank in the military
SF	The participant was the member of a special forces unit in the military
SI	The participant was the member of a special intelligence in the military
SU	The participant was the member of a Police special unit that dealt with terrorism or serious organized crime
Int/Sec	The participant was the member of s state security or intelligence agency
Police	The participant served in a civil Police force or service
Commercial	The participant has experience in the conduct of commercial business in another industry

The former experience key (above) details the experience of the interviewee prior to their entry into the private security field. The Codes SF, SI, SU and Int/Sec are indications that the participant has served in an organisation connected with ‘high policing’ or specialist ‘non-green army’ functions.

The sub-fields key (below) provides a key to the sub-fields of security in which interviewees had been active.

²³⁰ There is a small area of domestic activity in relation to unexploded ordinance within the UK construction industry. Some construction projects require the employment of a ‘banksman’ responsible for monitoring a construction site that may be contaminated with unexploded ordinance, usually from the Second World War. There was no indication from this study that any significant number of professionally qualified EOD specialists engaged in this work.

Sub-Fields Key

Code	Sub-field	Description
CP	Close protection	The specialist protection of individuals to whom a security threat may exist; classic 'body guarding'
PS	Protective security	The security of all manner of facilities and assets; from private dwellings to oilrigs. This includes a wide range of activity including the management of guard-forces, operational management of physical and technical protection measures (walls, fences, lighting, CCTV, perimeter protection systems etc.), the escorting of goods and personnel in transit (i.e. convoy escorts, cash in transit etc.). This can include all elements of the security management process including intelligence management and threat/risk assessment etc.
PM	Protective security maritime	The practice of providing security to vessels at sea. This includes the physical provision of security staff to vessels, and well as ancillary services such as maritime risk/threat assessment and intelligence.
SC	Security consultancy	The practice of conducting security surveys and assessments, auditing security operations, advising on the design of physical and technical protection systems, the conduct of security investigations, intelligence reports, incident reviews, threat and risk assessments, the design of security policies and procedures, and a host of other tasks requiring specialist security advice. Consultancy can extend to the provision of advice on military as well as security matters.
CS	Covert surveillance	The practice of physically following and monitoring the activity of a target person or group without then being aware that they are being watched.
KR	Kidnap Ransom and Extortion	The provision of specialist consultancy to families and organisations that have experienced the kidnap, abduction or detention of a member with the aim of securing a ransom or extorting other types of undertaking or concession.
TR	Training	The provision of training and instruction in a range of security and military disciplines on a commercial basis. This can extend from the provision of training in basic individual security skills to members of guard force, to the establishment of training regimes for foreign counterterrorism units, paramilitary organizations, security an intelligence services and regular military forces.
MA	Mine action Explosive Ordnance Demolition (EOD)	The management and practice of locating and destroying or disarming bombs, mines and other explosive devices.
CB	Commercial, Small Business	The practice of the marketing and selling of private security services, including 'business development' and client relations, within a 'small business' level, i.e. as a sole trader of freelance or consultancy services or within a security company that has low to medium levels of revenue and no developed corporate structure.
CC	Commercial, Corporate	The practice of the marketing and selling of private security services, including 'business development' and client relations, within an established company with high levels of revenue and a developed corporate structure

Appendix E - Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

'22, Two-two,	22 nd SAS Regiment, The Regular Army Regiment of the Special Air Service
'9 millie' or '9 mil'	A 9mm caliber automatic pistol
14 Intelligence Company or '14 Int'	A UK Special Forces unit which conduct specialist surveillance operations
AB	Assistant Boatswain
AK47	An assault rifle designed in the Soviet Union
AKE	A UK Private Military Security Company
AMIC	Army Methods of Instruction Course
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
ArmorGroup	A Private Military Security Company headquartered in the US and UK and registered in a number of countries
BAPSC	British Association of Private Security Companies
BATT	British Advisory and Training Team, a military mission to train foreign forces
Blackwater	A US Private Military Security Company
Blue Hackle	A Private Military Security Company founded in the UK
Brassed	Killed
CAC	Conduct After Capture, training to prepare a service person for the eventuality of capture.
Callsign	A military unit, denoting their unique indicator on a radio network.
CENTCOM	Central Command, one of the 11 unified combat commands of the US Department of Defense
Civvie, Civvies	Civilian, civilians
Control Risks	A Private Military Security Company founded in the UK
CP	Close Protection, body guarding
CPA	The Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq
Craphat	A soldier who is not Airborne qualified and does not wear the distinct maroon beret of airborne forces.
Crash-out	To deploy rapidly to a situation or incident.
CRB	The UK Criminal Records Bureau, now the Disclosures and Barring Service
CRG	See Control Risks Group
CTR	Close Target Reconnaissance
DSL	Defense Systems Limited a UK Private Military security Company, later became ArmorGroup and then part of G4S
ENG1	Form attesting to a seafarer's medical examination
EO	See Executive Outcomes
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Demolition

Erinys	A Private Military Security Company Registered in the British Virgin Island's, UK and South Africa
Executive Outcomes	A South African Private Military Company
FCO	The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FEBA	Forward Edge of Battle Area, the 'front-line'
Fieldcraft	The techniques and practices of conducting combat operations and living in the field
FRU	Force Research Unit
G4S	Group 4 Security, a multinational private security company
GPS	Global Positioning System
Green army	British Army Colloquial for conventional military units not associated with the Special Forces or Special Intelligence communities
Groupe Islamique Armé	Algerian Insurgent group
Guards	Cavalry and Foot Guards of the Household Division. Military regiments which traditionally guard the Sovereign
Gurkha	Soldiers of Nepali origin
HM Government, HMG	Her Majesty's Government, the British Government
ICoC, ICoCA	International Code of Conduct, International Code of Conduct Authority
IMATT	International Military Advisory and Training Team
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
JDSC	Junior Division Staff College; the qualifying course for Captains wishing to become Majors.
JSIO	The Joint Service Intelligence Organisation, a British Army Intelligence Corps unit providing training to military personnel in a number of intelligence related functions.
KMS	Keenie Meenie Services, a UK based private military security company
LQRA	Lloyds Quality Registration Assurance, an auditing company
M4	An US designed assault rifle
MACP	Military Assistance to the Civil Powers
Made-ready, to make-ready	To prepare a weapon for firing by putting a round in the firing chamber; also known as 'cocking' a weapon
Manned guarding	The provision of security guards for facilities and premises
MCT	Military to Civilian Transition
Mob, 'The Mob'	The Army
MOOTW	Military Operations Other Than War
MPRI	Military Professional Resources Incorporated, an American Private Military Security Company
MSO	Maritime Security Officer

NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland
OC	Officer Commanding, usually a Major or equivalent
OOTW	Operations Other Than War
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
ORHA	Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
Para, Paras	Members of the UK Parachute Regiment. Sometimes also used to refer to other units attached to airborne forces
PID	Positively Identify
PMSC	Private Military Security Company, a private company engaged in the commercial provision of military and security services
Principal	The person being protected by a close protection detail
PSO	Peace Support Operations, peacekeeping and peace enforcement
PTI	Physical Training Instructor
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
R-to-I	Resistance to Interrogation
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAF Regiment	The Royal Air Force Regiment, a unit of the RAF tasked with the protection of airfields and trained in air defense and infantry tactics
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
RMA	The Revolution in Military Affairs
RMP	Royal Military Police
RTU	Returned to Unit
Rupert, Ruperts	A British Army colloquial term for Officers
Saladin	A UK Private Military Security Company
Saladin	A private military security company
SAMI	The Security Association for the Maritime Industry
Sandline	A UK Private Military Security Company
SAS	Special Air Service Regiment, a Special Forces Regiment of the British Army
SBS	Special Boat Service, a Special Forces Unit of the Royal Marines
SCEG	The Security in Complex Environments Group a special interest group of the UK Aerospace Defence Security and Space Group
SF	Special Forces
SIA	The UK Security Industries Authority
SIG	A Swiss designed automatic pistol

Siminov	A Soviet Self Loading Rifle
SIS	The UK Secret Intelligence Service, MI6
SLR	Self-Loading Rifle, a Battle Rifle
SOCA	The Serious Organised Crime Agency of the British Police, now the National Crime Agency (NCA)
SOE	The Special Operations Executive, a clandestine organization founded by Winston Churchill to conduct unconventional warfare against the Germans during the Second World War, a forerunner of the SAS
Special Branch	A UK Police grouping dealing with national security and intelligence
SQS	Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant – a senior NCO responsible for the stores and logistics of a Squadron
SQS	Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant
Squaddie	A colloquial term for British soldiers
SSR	Security Sector Reform
Stand-to	To prepare for attack or action
STCW	Standards of Training Certification and Watch keeping for seafarers’
TA	Territorial Army – the United Kingdom’s reserve forces
Tab, to tab	To march, abbreviation of ‘tactical advance to battle’
TCN	Third Country Nationals
The Detachment, the ‘Det’	14 Intelligence Company
Tradecraft	A collective term used to refer to the techniques of covert action. This may refer to skills or procedures used to conduct espionage or counter terrorism.
UDI	The Unilateral Declaration of Independence, a political declaration made by the Rhodesian Government in 1965
UNPROFOR	The United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia
Warrant Officer	A senior NCO rank incorporating two ‘classes’, Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) is usually a Company or Squadron Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) is the Regimental Sergeant Major of a Battalion or Regiment.
Watchgard	A UK Private Military Security Company
WO, WO2	See Warrant Officer
WO2	Warrant Officer Second Class, a senior NCO responsible for a company or squadron of soldiers
ZANU PF	The Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

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