

## **Political Topographies of Private Security: Private Security Companies and Postcolonial Political Economy in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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This chapter investigates the political topography arising around private security companies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The privatization of security is a challenging and complex tendency that defies much existing conceptual approaches within political science. Building on insights from actor-network theory, this chapter argues that private security does not represent a simple ‘hollowing out’, weakness, or retreat of the state in favor of market actors. Rather, this chapter suggests that it indicates a reconfiguration of the political ordering of economic interactions. In the new topography that arises, private security companies are pivotal agencies reinforcing a fault line between an Africa of formal, state-endorsed western-style economic interactions on the one hand, and an informal Africa on the other. Within the formal African political economy, private security companies further legitimize, formalize and make more efficient existing flows of resources, and reduce the field of contestation and negotiation over the distribution and allocation of those resources.

