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## Governing (in)security in a postcolonial world

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Jana Hönke and Markus-Michael Müller

**Governing (in)security in a postcolonial world. Transnational entanglements and the worldliness of ‘local’ practice**

While the analysis of transnationalized forms of security governance in the contemporary postcolonial world features prominently in current debates within the field of Security Studies, most efforts to analyse and understand these processes proceed from an unquestioned ‘Western’ perspective, thereby failing to consider the methodological and theoretical implications of governing (in)security under postcolonial conditions. This paper addresses this void by highlighting the entangled histories of (in)security governance in the (post)colonial world and by providing fresh theoretical and methodological perspective for a security studies research agenda sensitive to the implications of the postcolonial condition.

*Keywords: Security Studies, security governance, postcoloniality, methodology, practice approaches, ethnography*

While there has been a growing interest in postcolonial approaches within the field of International Relations (IR) for moving beyond the limits and problems of dominant Western-centric approaches to global politics (e.g. Hobson, 2012; *Millenium*, 2011; Nair, 2007; Slater, 2004; Ling, 2002; Paolini et al., 1999), this has been less the case within the sub-field of Security Studies (SS). When considering that most of SS’s attention to (in)security in our contemporary world is inseparable from social and political developments in ‘most of the world’ (Chatterjee, 2004)—that is the postcolonial world outside, but also within, the ‘modern West’—and the resulting implications and threats these developments are imagined to represent for global security and stability, this lack of interest is not only surprising. It also limits the explanatory and analytical potential of contemporary SS. Most efforts to analyse these processes and the resulting transnationalization of security governance in our contemporary

world depart from an unquestioned 'Western' perspective, assuming that long-cherished concepts, methods and theories that were developed in and against the empirical background of the Western experiences can simply be applied to the analysis of the governance of (in)security 'abroad'. This leads to a highly biased form of knowledge production, which, it has been pointed out in a paradigmatic way for international SS, due to the underlying Western-centrism, is of 'arguably limited empirical and political relevance for major parts on the non-western world' (Buzan and Hansen, 2009: 19).

Of course this is not to deny that questions of postcoloniality have been completely ignored by SS. In addition to the somewhat pioneering works of Ayoob on the *Third World Security Predicament* (Ayoob, 1995), there have been a number of attempts to analyze the governance of (in)security under postcolonial conditions (e.g. Agathangelou and Ling, 2004; Krishna, 1999; Muppidi, 1999). And even some introductions to the field of critical SS include sections or chapter-long engagements with the broadly conceived issue of 'postcoloniality' (Peoples and Vaughn-Williams, 2010; Acharaya, 1997). However, such efforts have been of marginal interest to the various research agendas within SS and convincing calls for a 'postcolonial moment in security studies' (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006) have received remarkably little attention thus far. As a result, SS continue to be haunted by a 'Western-centrism' that makes the knowledge production within the field parochial and peripheral, because it 'mistakes 'Western' experiences for the universal, thus failing to take note of different insecurities and responses in other locales' (Bilgin, 2010: 619).

Addressing such shortcomings and problems stemming from the Western-centrism of SS is the principal goal of this *special issue*. Its central claim is that the notion of postcoloniality is central to such an endeavour, as it helps us to critically engage with the entangled histories of transnational security governance from a de-exoticising perspective that avoids essentialist practices of othering. Such a claim, however, should not be read as an uncritical call for homogenization that renders the thinking of difference impossible. Rather, the related challenge consists in taking differences and the 'exotic' serious in a way that critically interrogates the underlying relations of power and political purposes through a 'strategic exoticism' that does not deny difference but avoids its mystification and essentialization by re-working and challenging exoticist representational codes by uncovering their underlying sets of differential (epistemological, political, symbolic, etcetera) power relations (Huggan, 2001: 32).

For uncovering such processes and practices in transnational fields of postcolonial (in)security governance, fresh theoretical and methodological approaches are needed; approaches that are suitable for and sensitive to the particularities of governing (in)security under postcolonial conditions and the related questions of local agency, processes of translation, appropriation and resistance. In this regard, this special issue calls for an empirical postcolonial SS research agenda that moves beyond the predominant abstract thinking that dominates much of the related IR scholarship that, while correctly challenging the epistemological violence and blind spots of Western-centrism, remains overly situated at the level of macro/meta theoretical analysis. In our view this level of analysis provides little insights into a deeper understanding of how those transnational fields of security governance in our postcolonial world work ‘on the ground’. Of course, this is not to deny the relevance of such studies, nor is this a plea for a naïve ‘theory vs. empirical research’ argument. Rather we follow in this article Bourdieu’s dictum that ‘theory without empirical content is empty, but empirical research without theory is blind’ (Bourdieu, 1988: 774). Therefore, all contributions to this special issue bring into productive dialogue theory and empirical research; a dialogue that we consider to be essential for understanding and explaining transnational fields of security governance from a non-Western-centric perspective. For this endeavor, we also consider essential to work with empirical material that includes but goes beyond written text and includes everyday social practices; another engagement the contributions to this special issue share.

Against this background, this article will outline what we consider to be basic parameters for a postcolonial SS research program that focuses on the complex entanglements of transnational security governance as well as the involved interactions between ‘local’ and ‘external’ actors, practices and discourses. It offers a combination of theories and methods that we consider particularly useful for their analysis and for moving beyond problems and blindspots within contemporary SS scholarship on (in)security governance in our postcolonial world. In this endeavor we bring into productive dialogue propositions from neighboring disciplines, area studies and critical security studies, and propose in particular three strategies in this regard: first, the identification of ‘new’ translocal objects of research and the pluridirectional travelling of concepts that implies applying concepts that capture experiences in the postcolony to ‘the West’ (*worlding*); second, combining discourse approaches in the empirical research traditions of a Foucauldian analytics of governing with a methodological ‘practice turn’ that point attention to competing rationalities of governing (in)security and to everyday forms of practice and local agency; and third, empirical research in the tradition of political anthropology.

Before turning to these issues, we want to highlight that while being aware to the fact that not all societies in our contemporary world were either colonising powers or subject to colonialism (and imperialism), we nonetheless argue that even in those societies, the governance of (in)security was affected by colonial encounters, most of all through processes of more or less ‘voluntarily’ (and more or less selective) adaptations of globally dominant security knowledge, institutions (like prisons, police forces or ‘modern’ armies), technologies and practices that were themselves products of different colonial encounters, as the next paragraphs will show in greater detail.

### *Entangled histories of (in)security and the postcolonial condition*

Before addressing the entangled histories of (in)security governance, it is necessary to analytically differentiate between *postcoloniality*, or *the postcolonial condition*, and the notion of the *postcolony*. With the *postcolonial condition*, or *postcoloniality*, we refer to a global phenomenon of interactions based on unequal power relations in an era that goes beyond the world of colonialism, but that has been (and continues to be) decisively shaped by colonial encounters. In this regard the notion of postcoloniality has a global analytical scope and stresses the legacies of colonial forms of rule, knowledge production and subjectification that continue to shape our contemporary world where ‘real’ colonies have nearly ceased to exist (Hall, 1996; Gupta, 1998). While colonies have nearly disappeared, ‘coloniality’, its logic of domination, as well as the resulting/underlying ‘geopolitics of knowledge’ can still be observed today (Mignolo, 2005). Postcoloniality thus designates situations of rule and subjectification that are based on ‘us vs. the inferior other’-constructions and recourse to civilization and modernization discourses justifying asymmetrical interventions ‘expressing the privilege of possessing dominant categories of thought from which and where the rest of the world can be described, understood, and “improved”’ (Mignolo, 2005: 36, original emphasis). This Western ‘will to improve’<sup>1</sup> is based on a particular polarized and hierarchical form of representation and knowledge production that Coronil (1996) has called ‘Occidentalism’. He defines the latter as

the ensemble of representational practices that participate in the production of conceptions of the world which (1) separate the world’s components into bounded units; (2) disaggregates their relational histories; (3) turn difference into hierarchy; (4) naturalize these representations; and thus (5) intervene, however unwittingly in the production of

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<sup>1</sup> This notion has been borrowed from Murray Li (2007).

existing asymmetrical power relations. (Coronil, 1996: 57)

Thinking about the postcolonial condition, thus implies moving beyond the static analytics of 'bounded units' and fixed territorial spaces (such as 'the South' or particular taken-for granted world regions) (Coronil 1996; see also Mignolo, 2005). With the term 'postcolonial' we furthermore read colonialisms (of different kinds) 'as part of an essentially transnational and transcultural "global" process' (Hall, 1996: 247), shaping and reorganizing always entangled 'local' and 'global' power relations, even beyond those cases with histories of direct colonization—be it as colonizing or colonized societies. The term therefore introduces a different reading of capitalist modernity in that it emphasizes the centrality of entangled power/knowledge/practice fields through which unequal power relations emerge, are being transformed and challenged.

Compared to the global reach of the postcolonial, the analytical scope of *the postcolony* is more circumscribed. Typically, the postcolony has been defined as

nation states, including those from the former USSR, once governed by, for, and from elsewhere; nation states in which representative government and the rule of law, in their conventional Euro-modernist sense, were previously "underdeveloped." (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006: 2-3)

Although there are different legacies and manifestations of (post)colonialism, it is possible to speak of structural factors and attributes common to postcolonies. These pertain to

a specific system of signs, a particular way of fabricating simulacra or re-forming stereotypes. [...] The postcolony is characterized by a distinctive style of political improvisation, by a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion as well as by distinctive ways in which identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation. But the postcolony is also made up of a series of corporate institutions, and a political machinery that, once in place, constitute a distinctive regime of violence. (Mbembe, 2001: 102-103)

While there is something particular about the postcolony, these particularities are the product not of isolated and 'endogenous' factors but stem from entangled histories, global encounters and uneven power relations. Taking such particularities serious, furthermore, does not imply an 'othering' of the related experiences by claiming they are essentially different from the 'West'. Such 'difference' is, in fact, what the 'rest' was always expected to provide (Bilgin, 2009: 341)

for the epistemic, academic and political self-imagination of the ‘West’, and in a moment we will introduce the idea of ‘worlding’ to move beyond such essentializing understanding of difference. Before that, however, we propose a broadening of conventional understandings of the postcolony. While this notion is frequently used to describe those spaces that became independent nation states governed by the formerly colonized indigenous population, we argue that postcolonial relations also characterizes the relationship between indigenous people and Creole elites, as, for example, in Latin America, as well as those between indigenous populations and the majority of the society in settler colonies inside ‘the West’, like North America, Australia and New Zealand. In the latter cases, colonial settler societies that gained political independence continue to marginalize and discriminate against indigenous populations, inscribing postcolonial relations into liberal-democratic states that are marked by ongoing struggles over rights and recognition of indigenous groups (Grossman and Sparks, 2005; Johnson, 2011). Response to such struggles, as Crosby and Monaghan show in their contribution to this special issue, is inseparable from a form of ‘settler governmentality’. This mode of governmentality, they demonstrate for the Canadian case, aims at eliminating indigenous practices through the deployment of managerial, coercive and legal technologies. Including settler societies into our understanding of the postcolony thus brings frequently neglected postcolonial power relationships within Western liberal democracies into a postcolonial SS research program.

Despite the previously made analytical distinction, the postcolonial and the postcolony are closely intertwined—conceptually and politically. Obviously, postcolonies are privileged places of contemporary ‘improvement’ and civilizing missions. For moving beyond the Western-centrism that informs much of the related literature on these interventions, it is first of all important to sensitize SS to the ways colonial and imperial encounters shaped the knowledge, institutions and practices involved in the governance of (in)security at home and abroad, thereby making visible the entangled transnational histories of postcolonial (in)security governance.

In this regard, scholarship on empires and colonialism has demonstrated how colonial territories and colonized people served as ‘laboratories of modernity’ (Stoler and Cooper, 1997: 5), where colonial powers experimented with and developed administrative practices, knowledge and technologies of rule that were ‘re-imported’ back home. Even seemingly core ingredients of ‘Western’ disciplinary and surveillance power, like the panopticon were, contrary to commonly

held wisdom, inventions of the colonial encounter (Mitchell, 1988: 35).

Similar developments, more directly related to the governance of (in)security, can be identified within the realm of policing. For example, the emergence of the London Metropolitan Police in 1829, frequently referred to as the world's first 'modern' police force, was inseparable from knowledge production and practices regarding the governing of (in)security, political order, 'indigenous subjects' and 'dangerous classes' not only in the British colonies in North America, Africa and Asia, but also in Ireland (Williams, 2004; Brogden, 1987). This pattern of 'cross-fertilization' between colonial and domestic policing practices and knowledge continued to shape British policing ideas and practices throughout the twentieth century (Sinclair and Williams, 2007). Of course, such entangled histories are not exclusively British. French policing, for instance, another seemingly 'classic' case of 'European' policing emerged as 'an interactive process between the empire and mainland France', a process in and through which ideas of urban planning, social control, legal practices as well as social regulations permanently traveled back and forth between colony and metropole, thereby converting French colonies into 'laboratories for organized violence, where new forms of suppression, punishment, and political control were practiced and refined' (Thomas, 2011: xxii-xxiii). The continuing legacy of such encounters has been highlighted in McCoy's analysis of the entangled history of (post-)colonial policing and state formation in the United States and the Philippines. His study showcases the crucial role of policing within the mutually reinforcing patterns of transnational (post-)colonial state formation and the emergence of surveillance regimes and technologies in both countries from the beginning of the twentieth century to the contemporary 'war on terror' (McCoy, 2009).

These studies, while being sensitive to the unequal power relations that underpin (post)colonial entanglements, tell us that such encounters cannot be analysed as simple one-directional processes in which seemingly all-powerful 'Western' actors and interests simply impose their will and 'domestic' institutions upon 'the rest'. Rather, they demonstrate that the actions of 'Western' actors are decisively shaped and transformed in and through (post-)colonial entanglements and interactions. This also implies that seemingly subaltern actors can and do appropriate, and even 'refine', 'Western' security ideas, practices, institutions and discourses for their own interests. For instance, and in contrast to the long-standing exclusive focus on the central role of the United States in exported counterinsurgency doctrines to Latin America throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, recent studies have demonstrated how Latin American security apparatuses themselves formed a transnational counterinsurgency network that appropriated and remodelled US (and French) counterinsurgency doctrines for their own



practical needs and, as in the case of Argentina, exported their own knowledge and technologies of counterinsurgency to countries like Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala or Bolivia—in large part as a response to the ‘alienating’ foreign policy of the Carter administration and its human rights focus (Armony, 2008). In decentring, while not denying, the role of Western powers such as the United States, recent studies on state repression in Latin America also call for locating the ‘local’ histories of (transnational) (in)security practices and state terror ‘within the region’s broader colonial and postcolonial background and the formation of highly polarized societies based on class, race and ethnicity’ (Esperanza, 2010: 3).

This argument has obvious relevance beyond the case of Latin America (for similar dynamics in Africa, see Clapham, 1996). And it calls attention to the internal repercussions of the previously mentioned (post-)colonial encounters in modernity’s ‘laboratories of organized violence’ themselves. As Ayoob has convincingly argued (Ayoob, 1995: 21), addressing this question most of all implies to analyze (post-)colonial state formation processes. Throughout the history of colonialism and imperialism, the state itself, its technologies of rule and administration were actively exported from the West (explicitly or, as in the case of countries like Thailand or Japan implicitly through more or less forced processes of institutional adaptation) to societies in the Americas, Africa and Asia. Under the conditions of colonial rule with its primary interest in economic exploitation and political stability, state institutions and functions that existed at home, were frequently perceived as ‘infeasible’ for colonial subjects (Hansen, 2006: 174-177); mostly because many functions states exercised ‘at home’ were frequently considered to be unnecessary administrative, legal and ‘welfare’ baggage for the ‘limited ambitions of the colonial state’ (Herbst, 2000: 76).

As a result of this gradual process, and the controlling principle of colonial legislation and colonial subjects as permanently exempted and different from rule ‘at home’ in Europe, colonial sovereignty [and the colonial state itself] became (1) partial and provisional; (2) spectacular and yet ineffective in their exercise of territorial and social control; and (3) marked by excessive and random violence. (Hansen and Stepputat, 2006: 20)

The reference to the ‘ineffective exercise of territorial and social control’ points towards two aspects of central relevance for the question of (in)security governance in the postcolony. First colonial powers themselves in many cases hardly had any interest in crafting something resembling their protection and security providing home states, endowed with a more or less

well-established ‘monopoly’ of force. Operating with and under different, in fact multiple and frequently contradictory political logics than at home (Scott, 1995), the colonial ‘security’ apparatuses, including institutions of social control and the administration of justice (and punishment), was marked by complex articulations between temporarily different political rationalities. These included the coexistence of public and spectacular violence exercised by the colonial state, ‘traditional’ forms of ‘illiberal’ punishment as well as liberal, ‘civilized’ and ‘rational’—legal political forms of security governance, which through their articulations created an uneven, contradictory and frequently quite fragile colonial ‘mode of political normalization’, indicative of the ‘the halting and troubled career of the bio-political colonial state’ (Rao and Pierce, 2006: 17).

Second, as a result of this, colonial security governance, protection and coercion-wielding, were highly selective, privileging, in terms of protection as well as repression, places and populations that were of central economic and/or political importance for the maintenance of colonial rule and the reproduction of colonial power. This selectivity—largely out of fiscal, economic and political (including racial) reasoning—explains the widespread practice of ‘outsourcing’ political authority, coercion and repression to companies (Author 1, forthcoming) and to local intermediaries, the famous ‘big men’, ranging from the *caciques* in Latin America (Kern, 1973) to the *zamidar* landlords in India (Cohn, 2006) to ‘traditional’ chiefs (Mamdani, 1996), to name just some of the most prominent mediating local authorities. In addition to this, through their linguistic capabilities, native colonial bureaucrats and low-level employees were also frequently able to influence and transform the information, knowledge and actions of colonial powers, and to appropriate their symbols for their own purposes, thereby mediating colonial power and brokering between local elites and colonial officials (Lynn Osborn, 2003). The result of this situation has been the widespread ‘rule of intermediaries’ (Schlichte, 2005) throughout the (post)colony, the related informally negotiated character of political power (e.g. Author 2, 2012a; Hagmann and Péclard, 2010), the presence of multiple forms of ‘private indirect government’ (Mbembe, 2001: 67-101), as well as the related dispersion of violence and fragmentation of sovereignty (Davis, 2009; see also Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006: 35)

Undeniably, the particular configuration of this ‘fragmented sovereignty’ varies, as do the configuration of actors involved, the ‘decentralized’ nature of most postcolonial states (Krishna, 1999) and the negotiated character of the exercise of political power. Nonetheless, these structural aspects continue to shape the governance of (in)security in contemporary postcolonies, including the transnationalisation of security governance, raising the question

how such processes and developments can be investigated from a postcolonial perspective.

*Transnational (in)security governance through the lens of postcoloniality*

We claim that the point of departure for any research endeavor sensitive to the postcolonial condition of contemporary forms of transnational (in)security governance consists in what authors in other fields have called ‘provincialising’ (Chakrabarty, 2000) or ‘decolonizing’ (Gutierrez Rodríguez et al. 2010) SS. This means avoiding practices of analytical othering by emphasizing the analytical ‘limits of the European experience’ (Wong, 1997). Seth (2009) contrasts two strategies in this regard: One strategy consists in providing a different account of history through the lens of historical sociology. The other strategy, informed by postcolonial theory, implies showing the limitations and non-universality of European analytical categories. While the latter tradition thus sensitizes us to the fact that ‘the central categories of the social science are the product of a European history and are not necessarily adequate everywhere, even in their amended versions’ (Seth, 2009: 336), historical sociology, according to Seth, can provide original accounts of subaltern or non-European history. Seth, however, is more in favor of the postcolonial approach and argues that non-Eurocentric historical sociology is mainly about ‘producing “better” knowledge on the grounds that it more accurately re-presents what really happened’. By missing the fact that knowledge is not only about re-presenting the world but also creating it, historical sociology, according to Seth, tends to produce an external relationship between knowledge and object, a situation that, in contrast to postcolonial studies, this discipline seems incapable to overcome (Seth, 2009: 336).

In contrast to such a rather rigid juxtaposition, we think that taking historical sociology serious, is indispensable for a postcolonial SS research program, but that in order to unfold its anti-western centric potential, historical sociology, national as well as international, must deeper engage with postcolonial studies. As Boatca and Costa have argued in their call for a ‘decolonized’ sociology, it is through such an approximation between sociology and postcolonial studies that the epistemological limits of sociology that are the result of a particular academic and epistemological institutionalization of the discipline, and ‘that so far have prevented the emergence of a global sociology of colonial, neocolonial and postcolonial contexts’ (Boatca and Costa, 2010: 14), can be overcome.

It is such a ‘decolonized’ historical sociological, through which ‘historical contextualization as a postcolonial method’ (Boatca and Costa, 2010: 17) can be productively integrated into a

postcolonial SS research program<sup>2</sup>, not only by highlighting entangled histories and providing necessary ‘better’ and subaltern knowledge of non-Western societies. Decolonized historical sociology can also call our attention to phenomena, while frequently considered to be occurring only beyond the West, characterize Western societies themselves, including, for example, areas hardly reached by the state and where the state’s monopoly of force is absent or strongly compromised (e.g. marginalized urban spaces, such as the *banlieues* in France, ETA strongholds in Basque country, urban and rural spaces controlled by the Mafia in Italy, or vigilante justice in the United States). Taking such insights serious illustrates the limitations of *analytical* categories bound to the idea of a Western-centric methodological nationalism for understanding (in)security governance even in our contemporary world more generally.

Having made this point, it is important to stress that we consciously separate European *analytical* from *theoretical* categories. Without denying that much, if not most, of European theory is marked by the above-mentioned problems stemming from Occidentalism and Western-centrism, instead of simply abandoning these theories, we share Bhabha’s ‘commitment to theory’ (Bhabha, 1994: 18-28). While challenging the ‘fictitious universalism’ (Bourdieu, 2000: 65) of Western theories, such a commitment, in our understanding, enhances their analytical scope through what Jackson, following Hall, called ‘theoretical transculturation.’ This implies ‘demonstrating that such [Western] theory does not in fact describe or map the entire planet, and that despite pretensions to universalism it suffers from gaps and lacunae, and for this reason needs to be revised in the light of local empirical conditions’ (Jackson, 2003: 73).

But the argument for provincialising SS can even be pushed further. Writing from an African perspective, Mbembe and Nutall (2004) argue that our task is not only to demonstrate the fallacies of knowledge derived from a particular European experience but rather a ‘worlding’ of the African experience (ibid., 2004: 348). Africa is fraught as an idea and object of academic research as it has become a sign in public debates for the ‘other’, the ‘failed’, the ‘incomplete’ and as *apart* from the world, probably more so than Latin America and Asia. Constructed as ‘out of the world’ by policy makers and academics, a postcolonial SS perspective would require to ‘reinscribe’ African (in)security knowledge, experiences and practices into the world and to thereby depict these as ‘normal’ and relevant part of the human experience, not as an exotic exception. As opposed to a dominant research focus on strongly institutionalized order, for

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<sup>2</sup> See Hobson (2012) for a good example of such a decolonized international sociology.

instance, the African experience of ‘indeterminacy’, ‘provisionality’, ‘contingency’ and uncertainty would be recognized as basic conditions of life—and therefore as general assumption and object of research, not as something exceptional (Mbembe and Nutall, 2004: 349). Recent scholarship in urban studies not only stressed the ‘ordinary’ character of (postcolonial) urban experiences across the world (Robinson, 2006) but also suggests that postcolonial cities like Shanghai, Dubai or Lusaka, rather than Western cities, might be the avant-garde of global metropolitan developments (Myers, 2011, Roy and Ong 2011) — including the governance of (in)security. The global south might in fact offer “privileged insight into the workings of the world at large” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012: 1). This calls for an engagement with site-specific modernities and ways of constructing security governance in “ex-centric sites” (Bhabha 1994: 6) in the peripheries of world society in which the Western narrative of modernity is but one amongst others informing people’s ways of imagining and constructing the world.

Taking such a perspective serious produces new understandings of the dynamics of peacekeeping, state-building and anti-terror interventions that SS often deal with as if an innocent division between interveners and intervened, a liberal ‘us’ and another ‘them’, could be drawn; or as if these interventions are the privileged sites for the globalization of security knowledge and technologies in our contemporary world. However, such processes also happen through more indirect ways, for instance through the power of dominant (in)security discourses that constitute situations and particular actors as transnational risks or agents of (in)security. A case in point is the ‘discovery’ of diaspora communities as partners in conflict prevention in ‘developing countries’, highlighted in Laffey and Sutharan’s (this issue) with reference to the international engagement with Tamil diasporas. When considering the above-mentioned entangled histories of (in)security governance, the analytics of postcoloniality also remind us, that security practices are globalised through borrowing and emulation by local elites—be it through forced geopolitical pressures or as a result of instrumental calculation—as well as through indirect effects of hegemonic discourses and practices in transnational fields (Bilgin, 2010: 618; 2009: 340). Jacobsen’s article in this issue on the introduction of the Unique Identity Number biometrical identification system for Indian citizens that is inseparable from globally dominant discourses on ‘technology, knowledge and development’ is illustrative in this regard.

Postcoloniality pervades security knowledge and practices in all these spaces, in which security governance is strongly shaped by external actors and/or transnational discourse and practice fields. However, few studies have looked into their *de facto* effects on local (in)security

governance and on the agency of those people involved and affected—in and beyond the postcolony. Where such agency has been taken seriously, such efforts have mostly localized the local in a way that ignores the ‘hybrid’ nature of the resulting transnational fields and interactions (but see, Mac Ginty, 2010). While SS has thus dealt with the transnational entanglements of (in)security governance in postcolonies and the ‘local’ repercussions of transnational security governance, much of the literature buys into the research objects, binary categories and unidirectional travelling of knowledge and institutions established in Eurocentric narratives of security governance. In remainder of this article, we will therefore highlight three methodological moves that in our view provide the basis for overcoming these deficits and rendering SS research sensitive to the postcolonial condition.

*New objects, traveling of concepts, a turn to practice and ethnography*

A first step for putting these insights into research practice implies rethinking research objects in a way that digs out their ‘invisible’ translocal dimensions. It also implies transferring research questions and analytical categories derived from the experiences in the postcolony to the West. In contrast to dominant one-way logics inherent in diffusion and transfer approaches, as well as in compliance and implementation research, such a ‘worlding’ perspective acknowledges the pluri-directional circulation and effects of knowledge and practices in transnational fields. New objects of study in this sense revolve around the constitution of new political subjects of transnational (in)security governance, such as diasporas (Laffey and Sutharan in this issue). We have alluded to another approach in this regard by referring to postcolonial urban studies; an inspiring research field for a postcolonial SS research agenda. Scholars sensitive to the worldliness of postcolonial urbanity started applying postcolonial approaches to the study of urban spaces within ‘the West’ that are often represented as ‘other-worlds’ (Hentschel, 2011). In addition to changing the direction in which research concepts travel, we see yet another promising avenue for decolonizing research on transnational security governance in moving the widely observable analytical privilege of formal and highly institutionalized forms of transnational security governance to more subtle, non-official and little institutionalized forms—and their interactions with more institutionalized counterparts. Examples in this regard are transnational functional fields such as the field of security professionals (Bigo, 2006; Leander 2010; Abrahamsen and Williams, 2010). In addition to existing research on such security assemblages, which focuses on how these transnational fields work and affect specific localities in the postcolony, a postcolonial perspective calls for more attention to how they interact with competing social fields in specific localities and how they are (re)constructed and

shaped by these interactions (see below). In his contribution to this special issue, Marc Duffield analysis the shift to resilience as dominant logic of organizing aid work as result of a contradiction between previous rationalities of aid and competing expectations and forms of resistance aid workers were confronted with on the ground.

A second strategy consists in bottom-up research that engages with everyday forms of security practice, with competing rationalities of governing (in)security and with local agency. Existing literature within such perspective in SS studies revolves around the effects of transnational (in)security governance. Instead of looking at, for instance, risk management or surveillance practices in the postcolony per se—a top-down approach that uncritically supports established theories on such governmental technologies—such work reconstructs de facto security practices that evolve around particular programs and devices. For the case of security interventions and post-conflict management, it has been shown how Western governance technologies affect local politics in ways that contradict the official justifications for these very interventions. Related studies also go beyond stories of failure and demonstrate, for instance, how external interventions (re)invigorate illiberal structures of indirect rule (Branch, 2011; Veit, 2009; Author 1, 2010). Adam Branch (2011) shows how human rights and security interventions in Northern Uganda produce counterproductive consequences, including their instrumentalisation by local and external elites for political and economic interests, as well as the depoliticising and anti-democratic effects of participatory and democracy-promoting interventions (see also Ferguson, 1990; Author 1, 2012). Such a perspective has been enriched by an area-studies typical ‘long-term commitment to place’ that ‘imposes empirical grounding and accountability on all abstractive practices that detach the elements of analysis from their antecedents and implications in people’s radically different ongoing experiences in the world’ (Guyer, 2004: 501).

While we appreciate such in-depth engagement with the de facto local effects of external security interventions and would hope for more such work, we suggest two promising avenues to go a step further in decolonizing SS studies. The first consists in combining discourse approaches in the empirical research traditions of a Foucauldian analytics of governing with a methodological ‘practice turn’ that brings in sociological approaches, non-discursive practices and artefacts in the study of the governance of (in)security. Yet such discourse/practice-oriented methodologies should be exploited more decidedly for a postcolonial SS research program. The second avenue revolves around engaging with subaltern agency, and the politics of translation, appropriation and resistance.

Concerning the first suggestion, key ingredients of the Foucauldian ‘toolbox’, notably discourse analysis and his work on governmentality have already been prominently and productively included into postcolonial research (Nichols 2010: 119) and related efforts by leading scholars for successfully challenging Western-centric perspectives on Foucauldian grounds (e.g. Said, 1987; Bhabha, 1991; Stoler, 1996; Mbembe, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004; 2011). In security studies, efforts of combining the ingredients of the Foucauldian toolbox with practices approaches, in our view, responds to two major limitations in contemporary critical SS and IR scholarship. In particular the so-called Paris School of security studies and other work related to the broader project of a sociology of international relations have propagated to move critical research on the power of knowledge beyond the study of text and (official) speech acts (Merlingen/Ostrauskaite 2005; C.A.S.E. Collective 2006; Pospisil 2009). However, this research still largely overemphasises the study of hegemonic discourses and their practical effects, while neglecting other discourses and practices. The routines and procedures of security practitioners in UN interventions, for instance, might be shaped to some extent by dominant liberal political discourse. However, transferred across different postcolonial social worlds, the practical sense(s) of practitioners in everyday security governance is likely to diverge from this regulating ‘macrological frame’ (Gupta, 1998). Within transnational security fields as well as in the implementation arenas of global (security) governance, different meaning systems meet, collide and are reassembled (Author 1, forthcoming). Bringing in non-discursive practices thus allows not only to move research beyond forms of ‘armchair analyses’ (Neumann, 2002: 628), it can also identify such parallel or competing, often non-hegemonic collective meaning systems beyond the ‘programmers’ view’ (Dean, 2007: 83) that powerfully constitute local security practices.

As one of the authors has shown for the case of the security practices of multinational companies in Sub-Saharan Africa, the actors involved in security governance are part of different, and often incommensurable, discourse and practice worlds that shape their sense-making of the world and eventually also their security practices (Author 1 forthcoming, 2012). Combining empirically-oriented discourse theory with practice-oriented methods (Pouliot, 2007; Leander 2010) allows here for the appreciation of texture—common meaning structures that pre-constitute agents’ identities and choices—where discourse theory alone would probably not be able to see it. This brings into view heterogeneous ‘low-status knowledge’ (Valverde, 2003) and routine practices that are central for governing (in)security in transnational security fields. Such an approach can reveal changes in the rationalities of security governance even if



these are not reflected in official speech, policies and programs. It thus brings into view ‘other’ knowledge and social institutions constituting security agents’ perceptions and choices in specific localities in the peripheries.

While some of the perceptions and practices of security governance by company agents refer to the hegemonic liberal discourse of corporate social responsibility, companies’ local ‘engagement’ is far more complex and ambiguous than admitted in the narrative of liberal governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Surveillance, deterrence, coercion and clientelistic practices are part of everyday security governance by these companies. Besides the diffusion of ‘ethical business standards’, corporate agents’ security practices are thus also constituted in a commercialized global security field (Bigo, 2006; Leander, 2010) and a deeply rooted transnational practice community of a ‘politics of the belly’ (Bayart 1993). The latter has evolved over at least the last 150 years between Western interveners and African polities and revolves around providing personal rewards to authorities and political clients in exchange for stability (Author 1, forthcoming).

Instead of talking about the deficits or failure of transnational security governance normatively understood, this analysis demonstrates to what extent ‘external’ agents govern (in) security according to different rationalities of governing (in)security. The resulting heterogeneous practices compete, sometimes openly contest, and often merely coexist with those prescribed by expert knowledge and transnational formal institutions of security governance in various combinations, forming a heterogeneous ‘regime of [security] practice’ (Foucault, 1991: 75; Author 1, forthcoming).

But such emphasis on the power of meaning systems should not be misinterpreted as a stance for a deterministic vision of agency in the postcolony. While we are convinced that agents are socially situated and their perceptions and choices constituted by collective meaning systems, there is of course room for agency and creativity in creating and (re)shaping (in)security governance under the condition of post-coloniality; and this brings us to the second research frontier within a practice and agency-oriented approach to a postcolonial SS research program. To reveal the pluri-directional circulation of knowledge and practices, research must analyze the concrete ways in which security knowledge and practices are created and used in a given transnational field. This overcomes a problem in IR-oriented SS that privileges the implementation of transnational policies and technologies originating from ‘the West’

elsewhere without considering how these are locally understood, interpreted and transformed through practices of translation, appropriation and/or resistance.

Yet such interventions create new forms of politics among those subject to them. This translates in instrumental collaboration, resistance, and various other forms of ‘quiet encroachment’ (Bayat, 2000). Therefore, interventions should be studied in a more humble way regarding, amongst other factors, their impact on the complex ‘politics of the governed’ (Chatterjee, 2004) in the postcolony. Looking into processes of appropriation, translation, and contestation of global models and their (subversive) transformation in transnational fields holds further insights into contemporary (in)security governance under the condition of postcoloniality (Author 2, 2012: chapter 4; Bachmann, 2010; With author 1, Richmond, 2010). More research should look into the agency of the governed (Hansson et al. forthcoming) by studying ways of translating, subverting or collectively resisting as well as actively shaping transnational security governance (e.g. Scott 1985; Merry 2006; Rottenburg 2009). Apart from visible collective action, the lens of postcoloniality directs attention to tacit forms of resistance and translation. With de Certeau subversion can be studied as a mode of resistance, not by rejecting or trying to openly alter governance interventions through collective action, but by more or less discretely using them for different aims and purposes in the everyday (de Certeau 1984). People might not be able to overcome a policy; often they might not even want to do that. But they have their ways to make of these policies “something quite different from what its authors intended” (Shore et al. 2011: 19). It also implies looking into the vernacularisation of security governance through processes of translation. For such an endeavour, a more thorough engagement of SS studies with ethnography is apt in our view; the endeavour to bring the largely understudied aspect of local agency of those addressed by and part of transnational security governance in the postcolony into a postcolonial SS research program.

The third methodological move we suggest here is thus a thorough engagement with ethnographic methods. While ethnography undeniably played an important part in the creation of occidental knowledge, recent scholarship has demonstrated the merits of this method for a postcolonial perspective (e.g. Appadurai, 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003; Stepputat and Hansen, 2001). This implies though that engagement with ethnography needs to go beyond a positivist understanding of ethnography as another method of data collection (Vrasti, 2008). Within anthropology in fact, the crisis of positivist representation has long become apparent (e.g. Clifford and Marcus, 1986) and fieldwork, participant observation and interpretation are conducted in order to uncover systems of signification with great sensibility for reflexivity. Our

call for interpretive ethnography and reflexivity therefore implies decisively more than ‘going local’; yet not necessarily an epistemological position that gives up on the possibility for intersubjectively understandable accounts of systems of representation. We rather content with Wedeen (2010) that an interpretive understanding and use of ethnography does not preclude generalization. On the contrary, we would argue that generalizations based on in-depth ethnographic expertise provide for better generalizations than those drawing on statistical surveys, abstract formal models, or secondary data that inform much contemporary SS and IR scholarship as a reflection of the hegemony of the “codeable over the “messy” (Auyero and Mahler, 2011: 216) within these fields. Yet a postcolonial methodology implies to glean the meanings that the people we study attribute to their social and political reality, thereby teasing out emic perspectives and interpretations which are indispensable for understanding and explaining (in)security governance in the postcolony (see also Schatz, 2009). Interpretive ethnography in this sense asks us keeping in mind ‘what agents think from’, not only ‘what about’. It also reminds us to take into account our own ‘writing from’. We do not refer to a place or identity in any essentialist sense in this regard, but to the socially constructed nature of social positions, perceptions and practices (Wedeen 2009; see also Pouliot 2007). This is apt in the field of SS in which objectivist truth claims tend to limit the use of ethnography in a way that ignores advances in the anthropological methodology. More importantly in the context of our argument, this risks to reproduce dominant depictions of the ‘other worlds’ and therewith ignores, not fosters, the project of a postcolonial SS studies.

Thus as the Comaroffs have argued, ethnography in a postcolonial world, if it avoids romanticizing ideas about ‘naked’ local truths, has a ‘unique value in plumbing the nature and effects of large-scale social, economic, and political processes’ (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003: 156)—including the emergence of transnational security fields. Such an endeavor is thus not bound to a single field site and ‘indigenous’ cultures but can be employed to trace social worlds and practices in multiple sites of global security assemblages (Marcus 1995; Shore et al. 2011). A postcolonial perspective thus also encourages using ethnographic methods to look at the social worlds powerfully constituting agents’ practices within transnational security fields. Such sites are for instance policy making processes in which security interventions are planned. Such a perspective is offered by Stepputat’s contribution to this special issue. He provides an auto-ethnography of knowledge production derived from the experience of writing a policy analysis for a Western government on ‘concerted civil-military planning and action’.

*Looking ahead: Towards postcolonial security studies*

In this article, we have called for an empirical postcolonial SS research program. In discussing theoretical and methodological implication of this perspective, we have highlighted the entangled nature of transnational security governance under postcolonial conditions and proposed three methodological strategies suitable for their analysis from a postcolonial perspective: identifying new research objects and ‘worlding’ the postcolonial experience; a theoretically transcultured combination of Foucauldian analytics of governing with practices approaches paying attention to competing rationalities of governing security and to local agency; and an engagement with interpretive ethnography. While we do not claim that these moves are the only ways in which a decolonised SS research agenda can be envisioned, we are nonetheless convinced that the proposed efforts provide essential building blocks for such an endeavour by challenging Western-centric approaches and empirically dis-embedded abstract reasoning from the bottom-up.

By productively engaging with one or more of the moves proposed in this paper, the articles that follow in this special issue, while not being exhaustive, illustrate the usefulness of a postcolonial perspective for understanding the complexities and ambivalences of transnational security governance in our contemporary postcolonial world. They point to some of the research frontiers we have suggested in this article and illustrate how the research program we suggest would close the identified gaps and/or create new insights and theoretical understanding of how (in)security is governed. In this regard, rather than reading this special issue as the first or ultimate statement on the dialogue between SS and postcolonial thought, it is our hope that the special issue stimulates and contributes to ongoing discussion, debate and critique in and through which a future comprehensive postcolonial SS research program becomes reality. In particular we hope that bringing together innovative ideas from neighbouring disciplines, in particular anthropology, from area studies and from critical security studies brings forward the debate about the implications and strategies for critical *empirical* research that takes the postcolonial condition seriously; within security studies as well as in the broader field of IR. However, that such a postcolonial perspective is indispensable for moving beyond the prevailing Western-centrism in contemporary empirical SS research should have become beyond doubt for readers of this issue.

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