

*'WRITE A CHEQUE, END A WAR':
RACE, CAPITAL, AND THE PUSH TO PRIVATISE PEACEKEEPING*

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*'[T]hey can do it faster, better, and
much cheaper than the United Nations.
All it takes to end Africa's most enduring wars
is a small, but willing chequebook.'*

Doug Brooks,
lobbyist for the private military industry²

When in 1998 Kofi Annan revealed that he had considered resorting to contracting private military firms to supplement UN peacekeeping forces in Rwanda, he soberly added that 'the world may not yet be ready to privatise peace.'¹ The world might not have been ready, but it seems the UN was: in the decades since Annan's address, the turn to outsourcing peacekeeping operations has been rapid and extensive.² Though much of the scholarship on privatised peacekeeping has focused on contractor abuses and the lack of transparency in UN contracting, this paper shifts its focus, using the case of privatised peacekeeping to tease out the entanglement of race and capital in 'humanitarian' arguments made by advocates of and apologists for the expansion of the market for force.

First, the paper uncovers the logics of race and capital that underpin the push to privatise peacekeeping, paying particular attention to racist claims about peacekeeping personnel themselves. It appears that industry logic would have us believe brown bodies are acceptable on the battlefield only when controlled through the market, with capital rendering military labour palatable and marketable in the humanitarian space. Second, the paper engages the industry's claim that the solution to seemingly intractable violence is as simple as 'writ[ing] a cheque' to 'end a war'.³ It argues that problematic claims such as this bring the logic of the market to complex humanitarian challenges, with potentially disastrous implications.

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² Doug Brooks, 'Write a Cheque, End a War: Using Private Military Companies to End African Conflicts' (*Conflict Trends*, June 2000) 33, 33.

¹ Kofi Annan, *Secretary-General Reflects on 'Intervention' in Thirty-Fifth Annual Ditchley Foundation Lecture*, UN Press Release SG/SM/6613 (26 June 1998), 8.

² Eg, Lou Pingeot, *Dangerous Partnership: Private Military & Security Companies and the UN* (Report published by the Global Policy Forum and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, New York, June 2012), 9.

³ Brooks (n 2).