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Marketing the Gurkha Security Package: Colonial histories and neoliberal economies of private security

Abstract

This article contributes to the critical theory and gender scholarship on the private military security companies (PMSCs) by focusing on how third country national (TCNs) gendered subjectivities are constituted through the intersections of colonial histories and neoliberal economic practices. Paying particular attention to Gurkha contractors, I ask how it is that as TCNs, Gurkhas are both poorly remunerated and experience inferior working conditions in contrast to their white western peers within the industry. In response, this article shows that Gurkhas' working conditions flow from their location on the periphery of the global employment markets, a disadvantage that is further inflected with their status as racially underdeveloped subjects. In this way, their material and cultural status within the industry is argued to be the outcome of tenacious colonial histories that continue – regardless of the abilities of the individual in question – to shape the labour market opportunities of men from the global South within a sphere of increasing importance to the governance of conflict and post-conflict in the contemporary moment.

Introduction

As Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) go global in their operations, they rely upon the labour of men and women from the global South for which gender and race practices continue to produce labour hierarchies and divisions in labour practices (Baker, 2009; Eichler, 2013, Chisholm, 2013). Gurkhas, a group of men from Nepal with an over 200-year military history serving on behalf of the British Empire and now in contemporary British military operations globally, are increasingly drawing upon by PMSCs as security labourers. Labeled as third country nationals (TCNs) by the private military and security industry, these men work as security contractors in Afghanistan, Iraq, Brunei, and throughout Asia and the Middle East. Their labour is indispensable within current global security operations and yet silenced from mainstream discussion on PMSCs. These men's experiences as TCN security labourers represent a modernising/imperial project and reflected in the works of Baker (2009), Ware (2013), Chisholm (2013) and Eichler (2013). Yet amongst these racial and modernising/imperial discussions, there remains little commentary over the ways in which the security market participants, namely the managers and marketers of TCN labour reinforce racial and gender market narratives. Such analysis can reveal the ways in which PMSC participants are complicit in racial and gendered practices that constitute security markets.

Placing the ways in which Gurkha security labour is managed and disciplined at the fore of discussions, this article considers how Gurkha labour is differentiated from their western counterparts, and in what ways do race, gender and colonial histories make intelligible these differences? By focusing on security labour this article connects security market practices to debates within migration studies and feminist global political economy (GPE). Consequently, it opens discussions into how the management and marketing of labour within PMSCs is also amenable to labour disciplining mechanisms in other global industries including those of textile and domestic care. By drawing upon feminist GPE scholarship and focusing on labour, this article brings into focus how colonial, gendered and racial scripts mediate the ways in which these men participate as security contractors and how market actors, namely the men who manage Gurkhas and Gurkhas themselves, are complicit in constituting these racial and gendered scripts.

To make these claims, I draw upon my ethnographic research where I lived and worked with security companies in Kabul Afghanistan between January 2008 and May 2010. Ethnography has

yet to be openly applied as a research method within PMSCs scholarship, and other critical security studies, largely because of the methodological issues surrounding ideas of objectivity. As Leander (2013) suggests, doing ethnography necessitates looking at objectivity differently. This does not mean that ethnography is somehow different research. No research is neutral but it is within ethnography whereby this is perhaps most starkly illustrated because there is no pure, perfect or essentialised *culture* in which the researcher is writing about (Haraway, 1997: 37). Importantly, there is always a certain creativeness and flexibility of theoretical framing and epistemological positioning the ethnographer is expected to engage in when going to the field. This flexibility in approach and in actual questions is vital to understanding the complexities of 'the field', the ways security is practiced and how meaning making occurs (Leander, 2013: 6).

A vital component of ethnography is rethinking objectivity and moving away from meanings anchored in positivists neutrality to one where objectivity is affixed to reflexivity and engagement with the field (Leander, 2013; Higate and Henry 2009; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2009). Where the author invites the reader into her world in which she has developed her research, how she has thought about things (Basham, 2013). It is through this inviting were transparency and accountability feature. It is also through this engagement where different power practices are observed. The actual engagement in the field allowed for a much richer analysis. It offered avenues to glean insight into the productions of security which might not have been apparent or noteworthy had I applied a different method to my research. I was able to engage in a deeper level with the men I was researching. I was 'out there' seeing and experiencing what they were (although differently) but we were able to talk about these insecurities and discuss the different opinions and approaches in a real time way. Additionally, my re-reviewing my research notes and interview transcripts after leaving the field provided another layer of analysis where I was able to examine the ways in which I was (and remain) implicit in the security practices I critique.

My ethnographic observations were complimented by extensive interviews with former British Gurkha Officers, now security company owners who market Gurkha security labour. It engages with the perspectives of these former British Gurkha officers within the private military and security industry and how Gurkhas, and they themselves as managers of these Gurkhas, are positioned within the market. In particular, I draw upon the interviews with former British Gurkha officers, presently Gurkha security company directors, Ian Gordon of IDG Security and Tristan Forster of FSI WorldWide. From my conversations with other representatives in the security industry, these two firms are the main companies providing Gurkha security services to the armed private military and security industry. In addition, and by way of offering a historical context for Gurkha employment in private military and security, are the/those perspectives gathered through interviews with a former security company director/owner of Gurkha Security Guards, Jon Titley, and one of the former directors of IDG Security, Tony Bergin. In total four interviews were conducted. Some men were interviewed more than once.

In addition to ethnography, my research inquiries are largely informed by postcolonial feminist global political economy (GPE) scholarship such as the work of Agathangelou and Ling (2009) and Tsing (2008)¹. Unlike contemporary PMSC scholarship, which remains largely situated within security studies, postcolonial feminist GPE scholarship considers the ways in which culture, i.e. colonial histories and performativities of race and gender, constitute market practices. As such, a synthesis of feminist GPE and a postcolonial feminist analyses offers insights into the various ways in which market practices have brought into existence women's and men's gender, class and racial bodies; positioned these men and women within structural hierarchies and how these individuals shape these gendered and racial power structures. Drawing upon this literature allows me to explore how colonial histories condition and influence different forms of security labour. This research is novel to PMSC literature as it expands debates and considerations away the confines of traditional security studies to broader debates within migration and GPE discussions concerned with the ways in which labour is disciplined and managed in capitalist markets.

The remainder of this article is divided into three sections. The first, *Myth of the white market* sets out the colonial narratives or scripts which are normalised and privilege whiteness in private military and security. It is these scripts whereby Gurkha labour is compared and measured against. *From Warriors of Empire to Third Country Nationals* detail specifically the colonial script which rendered Gurkhas in an underdeveloped position as men and labourers and positioned their white British Gurkha officers in the position to know them, to manage them and to represent them to western audiences. The final section, *Representations of Gurkhas through the Gurkha Security Package* demonstrates the very mechanisms and techniques western managers and security company owners use to represent Gurkhas to western clients. It highlights how representations of Gurkhas through this package are also claims of authority on who can and cannot speak for Gurkhas. It also demonstrates how Gurkhas are divided into categories, marketed and commodified and positioned in hierarchical terms in relation to their white western counterparts.

The Myth of the (white) Market

While Gurkhas labour, like other TCN labour, is indispensable to PMSCs, it is also largely silenced from academic and practitioner discussions. This silencing was illuminated during a conference in 2012 where I was asked to present some of my doctoral research. Out of the various panels presenting over the two days, I was the only one to present research on a group of security contractors labeled TCNs. Using the Gurkhas' own words, originating from my interview transcripts, I described how these men struggle to find work to support their families, their desires for more economic opportunities and their frustrations over the ways PMSCs treated them differently from their white western colleagues; specifically drawing upon the interviews where Gurkhas spoke of how their salary and work conditions were significantly lower than white western contractors, I highlighted racially informed disparities and inequalities within the private military and security sector. During the 'Question and Answer' section of my presentation, a director of a security-company stood up and in response to claims attesting to the poor treatment of Gurkhas, declared, 'but that's the market'. For him and a large portion of the audienceⁱⁱ, this statement was akin to an obvious and common sense declaration, which speaks to the naturalness of the labour and recruitment practices that constitute the overall working conditions of Gurkhas, and other TCNS, within the security industry.

For the director, the market is a natural force, whereby people freely engage on different levels. This is not to say that he did not acknowledge racial and gendered practices within the market, but more so his statement was akin to a view of market forces being beyond his (or anyone's) control. His comment worked to reinforce the market as a space which is disconnected from the everyday actions and beliefs of the people who participate within market spaces. Consequently, the racialised and gendered practices constituting Gurkhas as TCNs are obscured in the naturalising construction of the director's 'but that's the market' claim. As such, Gurkhas' different experiences are assumed as either unfortunate, but inevitable or through a market comparatively advantaged logic: the latter almost dismissing Gurkhas' experiences as problematic, because these men are comparatively much better off than their Nepalese counterparts. In either case, Gurkha positioning on the periphery of security markets is seen as inescapable. Gurkhas plights as natural, unfortunate and inescapable are further reinforced within the current PMSC literature. Gurkhas (and other men and women labeled as TCNs) are too rarely mentioned in discussions and debates on private military and security operations (Higate, 2012; Chisholm, 2013; Eichler, 2013). When they are mentioned in the private military and security literature, with the exception to the work by Chisholm (2013) and critical anthropologists such as Ware (2012), Caplan (1995), Streets (2004) and Des Chene (1991), it is usually through a de-historic, racialised lens which invariable reproduces them and their subjectivities as *naturally* different than their white western otherⁱⁱⁱ.

Market narratives and the silencing of the labour practices of Gurkhas, and other TCN labourers are mutually reinforcing. The neoliberal market logic purports an individualized master of one's universe narrative whereby racial and gender mechanisms are obscured. This logic is reinforced with the women and men, traditional marginalized, who garner more privileged positions—a practice captured in Sa'ar's *liberal bargain*. Consequently the neoliberal narrative remains pervasive; so much so that even when racial and gender practices are observed or acknowledged (as they were in my interviews), there continues to be a sense that the individual, if they just try hard enough or network enough, they can overcome these barriers. Yet as feminist and critical scholars are quick to point out, there is nothing neutral about these practices and in various ways neoliberal markets have exacerbated gender, class and racial inequalities. The rest of this chapter demonstrates the ways in which racial hierarchies, legitimised through colonial narratives, remain constitutive of the market.

There prevails a master narrative in private military and security about who security contractors are—observed in both detailed descriptions and imagery as well as demonstrated through implicit assumptions that are foundational to security practices. The explicit descriptions offer images and biographies of men who are white and western (Pelton, 2009; Schumacher, 2009; Scahill, 2009; Higate, 2012). The implicit are demonstrated in assumptions observed in particular calls for regulations of the industry that invariably ignores the experiences of global South security labour. In both cases, the security contractor is almost always a man, most likely a westerner, and someone who has acquired certain skillsets through special military or policing training^{iv}.

Gurkha, then, are a group of men treated as the *other* contractor; a security contractor who is forever understood through his relationship to his white counterpart. Gurkhas participation in private military and security is a representation of a growing group of men from the global South taking up work in the private military and security industry^v as security contractors, menial labourers and support staff (Barker, 2009; Stillman, 2011; Higate, 2012; Chisholm, 2013; Eichler, 2013). Yet, TCN recruitment into the security industry and their experiences are absent from mainstream PMSC scholarship and security practitioner discussions. As a result, their experiences and the racial and gender practices surrounding their recruitment and representations are silenced and the diversity of security contractors collapses into a western perspective and, therefore, ideas of choice and value maintain a distinct western-centric position. Crucially, there is nothing natural or inevitable about these men's TCN status. As demonstrated in the works of Tsing (2008), McDowell (2009), Skeggs (2004), Kopytoff (1989) and Appadurai (1986), value in the market is differentiated and determined through culture; it is not inherent within the labourer or their skill sets, but 'a judgment made about them' by the people consuming and exchanging them (Appadurai, 1986: 3). In private military and security, security value is intimately associated with the types of militarized masculinities security contractors embody (Higate, 2012).

As in other political and social domains, claims to particular forms of masculinities are also claims to authority (Connell, 2005; Enloe, 2007). This is observed in Joachim and Schnieker's (2012) assessment of PMSCs marketing 'professional masculinities'. Masculinities are also used to enact particular privilege in 'on the ground' security operations. Higate, in locating *where the men are* in private military and security draws reference to the multitude of masculinities employed amongst security contractors. These include the hypermasculine 'chicks dig it' US security contractors (2009), the British and US special forces trained contractors and the TCN Fijian and Latin American contractors (Higate, 2012; 2012a). Yet, neither Joakim and Schnieker's, nor Higate's analysis consider how particular histories and racial logics make these masculinities intelligible. In fact, the only time when race enters discussion is through Higate's examinations of TCN security contractors in which he terms them through the concept of enforcement masculinities (2012). With the exception to the work of Barker's (2009) and Chisholm (2013) within private military and security discussion and Ware (2012) in military discussions, much of the literature on private

military and security reinforces the claim, either by not incorporating a racial analysis or by implicitly treating all contractors as white, that to be a security contractor necessitates you are white—unless otherwise stated. Consequently, whiteness remains normalised, de-raced and privileged within private military and security not only through the actions of practitioners, but also re-enforced through academic inquiries.

Whiteness, although not explicitly stated in the aforementioned gendered scholarship on PMSCs, appeared throughout my research on Gurkhas. Whiteness was observed in the claim that private military and security contractors required particular western culture business acumen. In this logic, western men are seen as culturally competent, can speak and understand English and have western military training with operational experience. It is their western culture which allows western men to understand and offer high quality security to their often-western client and which separates them from TCN security contractors.

It is through this security discourses that we can also understand how different security subjectivities are brought into existence, embodied and valued in labour economies. Just as security and security commodities are brought into existence through discourses (inclusive of body performances and language), security markets rest upon the commodification of security but also the inflation of differences in labour. It is differences, marked through racial, colonial and gender social hierarchies, which determine how security labour and commodities are valued. As detailed by Tristan Forster in interview:

An expat [westerner] will be coming in at 8-15 thousand USD a month as opposed to TCN who commands 1 thousand USD. [The political economy of demand for different wages] puts people in different tiers. In terms of forgetting money and just comparing the capabilities is really interesting. If you looked purely at the skill set, English language is a problem [for many Indian Gurkhas] and, therefore, their ability to communicate with ex pats is difficult. They've existed in an Indian and Nepal environment, so the lack of international experience also reinforces [their lack of familiarity with western culture]. In terms of presentation, they are, or can be, less confident than a good ex pat. And certainly there is a perception in the market that 'oh they're the nice chaps that stand post' but they aren't as good in ability as my ex pat team (interview with Forster, 28 August 2012).

Difference justifies inequalities in pay, remuneration and contract labour. The markers of difference in the security industry are both gendered and racialised and come into existence through the same performativity that brings security into existence. Forster in interview describes how he understands market articulations of difference between Gurkhas and western white expats.

Gurkhas as [compared to] white expats as we call them in the security sphere...inhabit the third country national tier of the private security industry and are seen as, rightly or wrongly, and I think wrongly, as the guys that do static guard or convoy protection and not the higher paid close protection, VIP that the ex pats tend to do. Now in certain ways this makes sense. The private security's view of Gurkhas, is really the Gurkhas are TCNs. Obviously what you got is the British army Gurkhas and the guys leaving the British army these days have a level of English which is good as an English person and they equally have an earning expectation which puts them into a similar bracket of any Brit really that might want to get into the private security industry... The private industry doesn't have their head around that yet so in terms of British army Gurkhas, these men tend not to go overseas to work because the industry would never dream of paying a Gurkha 5-7 thousand US dollars a month because they don't realise their value (interview with Forster, 28 August 2012).

Because security is constituted and valued on the perceptions of what security is—constituted through global and local articulations of race, class and gender, differences amongst security labour

are constituted and valued based upon their naturalising qualities. So even while the British Gurkhas, illustrated in Tristan Forster's comments above, met the expected requirements of English business cultural and linguist competency, they are still viewed as a TCN martial race and, therefore, seen as less competent as their westerner ex-pat counterparts.

Understanding security through colonial scripts facilitates analysis into the ways in which security bodies are made intelligible and brought into existence through the colonial language used to define, give meaning and articulate Gurkhas. While beyond the scope of this article, but still worth mentioning, as I have discussed elsewhere, Gurkhas are compelled to perform in a particular and intelligible ways in order to make themselves intelligible political/economic and security subjects (Chisholm, 2013). Security, and the security providers, becomes intelligible through their repetitive acts of certain racial, gender and class norms observed in language and materiality. Participation is also compulsory and the risks for not participating in an intelligible script are high, Gurkhas risk a kind of death, whether socially or physically (Butler, 1990) or economically if they do not perform in certain ways.

Security markets are global markets which increasingly rely upon the labour of men and women from the global South. Racial and gender practices within global South labour chains and colonial histories mediate the ways in which commodifying race gets articulated.^{vi} While white men come to the market through their individual merit, Gurkhas, and other TCN men like them, are valued and made intelligible through their martial race and colonial histories. Gurkha access to security markets and the racialisation of their labour began with their colonial encounters with the British military (Enloe, 1981; Caplan, 1995; Streets, 2004). It was legitimised through the British Army's past and current treatment of these 'martial' men and reflected in the recruitment and commodification of Nepalese Gurkhas in private military and security today (Ware, 2012; Tamang, 2013). What Gurkha representations in the private military and security industry reveal is that this market cannot be reduced to economics, but remains a hybrid space, where social relations and understandings of self are constituted through a blending of nationhood, military affiliations, capitalism, neoliberalism and colonialism. It is this blending which gives meaning to the production of commodities and the differences in value, divisions in labour and articulations of choice for the migrant worker. The next section details the colonial histories which make Gurkhas intelligible as TCN security labourers, provide them access to the security industry but also mediate the ways in which they can participate.

From Warriors of Empire to Third Country Nationals

The colonial encounters^{vii} between Nepalese hill men and the British over 200 years ago brought Gurkhas as martial men into existence, not only in the western imagination (Caplan, 1995; Streets, 2004) but in Nepalese communities as well (Des Chene, 1991). At the center of the newly constructed Gurkha was the idea of a martial race warrior. The origins of martial race logics were first documented during British colonial control over India and then exported to other colonies (Killingray, 1999).^{viii} The great Sepoy Mutiny^{ix} in 1857 historically marked the moment a martial race began to be actively used as a military strategy in order for the British to find trusted indigenous soldiers (Pradeep, 1995; Roy, 2001). The ideology behind these logics was rooted in a long standing belief that some parts of communities were more inclined to violence and war and thus better suited for military service than others (Streets, 2004; Sinha, 1995).

Martial race was a fairly successful strategy used by the coloniser, but was not a precise logic. It could more accurately be described as 'an array of fairly vague ones which display variation over time and in the hands of different authors' (Des Chene, 1999: 122). Its intent was to create an ethnicity, whereby military vocation was an integral identifying feature amongst these men. By doing so, the British could draw upon a pool of martial recruits who could be counted upon as reliable upholders of the colonial system (Enloe, 1981: 25). It was this very flexibility and

ambiguity that made martial races adaptable to a variety of socio-economic and historical contexts as well as functioning to inspire, include, exclude and intimidate (Streets, 2004: 4). At home (in the UK), the martial race functioned as an inspirational tool for the image of British masculinity and racial superiority. In India, the martial race served as a tool to exclude certain populations deemed unsuitable and untrustworthy for serving the British Empire (Sinha, 1995; Streets, 2004: 4). Gender imaginings of these men were crucial. Indigenous groups of men deemed martial were positioned as the ideal colonial subject. These men were constructed as opposites to their Indian nationals. They were everything the Indian national was not: brave, loyal and physically fit. Their indigenous counterparts were assumed to be effeminate, religiously dogmatic, traditional and underdeveloped (Sinha, 1995).

Current representations of Gurkhas as martial men remain deeply rooted in this martial race colonial enterprise. In current security markets, both Gurkhas, and the Gurkha officers who market their skill sets, draw upon particular aspects of Gurkha colonial histories to offer the security market a description of who these men are and the market value of their labour. To claim 'he is a Gurkha' is similar to Butler's (1990) girling analysis, observed in the discursive declaration, 'it's a girl'. Both do more than just describe, they bring into existence and make intelligible particular gender and racial subjectivities formed in larger cultural scripts. In the case of the Gurkha, declaring him as such brings him into existence and makes him intelligible only through the colonial script of martial race. Declaring Gurkha brings about imaginings of a fierce warrior with physical prowess yet cheerfully natured to his allies. These characteristics are celebrated in exaggerated wartime stories such as Edmund Candler's, an officer in a Gurkha regiment:

It is not the nature of any Sepoy^x [to complain]. Patience and endurance is the heritage of all, but cheerfulness is most visible in the "Gurkh". He laughs like Atkins when the shells miss him, and he is never down on his luck. When the Turks were bombarding us on the Hai, I watched three delighted Gurkhas throwing bricks on the corrugated iron roof of a signaler's dug-out. A lot of stuff was coming over, shrapnel and high explosive, but the Gurkhas were so taken up with their little joke of scaring the signalers that the nearer the burst, the better they were pleased. The signalers wisely lay "doggo" until one of the Gurkhas appeared at the door of the dug-out and gave the whole show away by an expansive grin (Candler, 1919: 4).

Candler's story of the playful mischievous Gurkha in the face of war is coupled with popular military jokes such as the Gurkha's close encounter with a German soldier. In this exchange the Gurkha takes a swipe at the physically larger German with his famous kukri^{xi}. The German says "Ha, missed!" to which the Gurkha replies, "Shake your head" (Gould, 1999: 1). Of course these military stories are embellishments but they are illustrative of Gurkhas' contradictory colonial tropes of martial prowess coupled with an endearing childlike naivety. Importantly, these popular military vignettes reproduce the seemingly timeless warrior attributes embodied in the Gurkhas. These stories reappear in contemporary journalist writings on these men.

The Daily Mail Online reproduces these contradictory images of Gurkhas being both martial masculine men with the naivety of a child, taking everything literally in their detail of military incident occurring in Babaji, Afghanistan in July 2010^{xii}. In this incident a Gurkha from the 1st Battalion of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, was being investigated for beheading an Afghan man. The Daily Mail Online's headline read: As a Gurkha is disciplined for beheading a Taliban: Thank God they are on our side! In the image next to the headline illustrates a timeless aggression and fierceness in these men meant to provoke fear and intimidation for the audience. Below the image is the caption: The Gurkhas display their traditional weapons of choice. The article goes on to detail a fictional exchange between the Gurkha soldier and his (white) commanding officer:

Just picture the scene as a soldier returns from hunting an arch-enemy. Commanding officer: 'Did you get him?' Soldier: 'Yes Sir.' Commanding Officer: 'Are you sure?' Soldier: 'Yes Sir.' Soldier reaches into rucksack and places severed head on table. Commanding Officer: '***!' (Hardman, 10 July 2010).

These vignettes draw us as an audience, as a point of reference, back to these men's colonial origins, their contradictory masculinities of, on the one hand, being martial, fierce and brutal and on the other, illustrating their childlike innocence. They also play out in contemporary politics, highlighted in Joanna Lumley's pursuit for Gurkhas' UK settlement rights. Lumley, a British woman famous for her portrayal of *Patsy* in the television sitcom *Absolutely Fabulous*, amongst other appearances reaching back to the 1960s, popularised Gurkhas' migration issues with the UK public. Separated from other economic migrants because of their long history of British military service, the Gurkha citizenship struggle garnered supportive media attention (Ware, 2010). While the media was largely supportive of Gurkhas' claims for citizenship, racial imagining of these men resonated through these media narratives. Throughout their struggle, showcased in the media, the Telegraph's headline on 21 May 2009 read, "Gurkhas are 'coming home' after famous victory on settlement." The image that was positioned next to this caption was one where Lumley was featured most prominently. Gurkha men, women and a few children surrounded her as they all had their hands raised cheering the parliament's announcement to grant settlement rights to Gurkhas. The caption below the picture in the article reads: Joanna Lumley celebrating the campaign victory with Gurkhas. Her actual name is the only one mentioned in the article suggesting her individual importance while lumping the struggles, experiences and efforts various men and women from Gurkha communities under the homogenous category Gurkha. These texts and images silenced (or relegated to the background) the actual Gurkhas and their individual efforts, the Gurkha settlement rights narrative became largely known in media depictions and photos as Lumley's fight for the Gurkha.

Taking these stylised journal commentaries and military jokes aside, most literatures on Gurkhas are authored by former white British Gurkha officers. These men describe Gurkhas in a celebratory colonial nostalgia, employing the usual colonial tropes (Des Chene, 1991; Gould, 1999; Parker, 1999; Caplan, 1995). Consequently, these stories have worked to solidify a natural martial discourse about these men from the hills of Nepal. These colonial scripts not only make their way into larger political landscapes (inclusive of British military contemporary recruitment of Gurkhas in Nepal) (Ware, 2012).

Representations of Gurkha through the Gurkha Security Package

The martial race discourse appears throughout the marketing of Gurkhas in private military and security as well. Gurkha Security Guards (GSG), a PMSC solely recruiting British Gurkhas in the 1990s, described Gurkhas in a marketing brochure as:

a phenomenon...unique among the world's fighting men. Bred in one of the most inhospitable landscapes in the world, he is tough, self reliant and used to dealing with great hardship. The very word Gurkha has become a byword for steadfastness, courage and integrity and their reputation has won them respect and renown throughout the world (GSG brochure: no date, cited in Vines, 1999: 124).

GSG procured their Gurkha labour from former Nepalese men who served in the British military as British Gurkhas. This was largely due to specific directors in the security companies being former white British Gurkha Officers themselves and having the 'special' connection with a large unemployed Gurkha population. In an interview with Jon Titley, former director of GSG, he

commented that marketing schemes were not as important in ‘selling’ Gurkhas, as most of the companies and clients knew the martial qualities of Gurkhas.

Importantly, A Gurkha’s recruitment and marketing were dependent upon the former white British Gurkha officer, in this case Titley. He remained the gatekeeper who connected Gurkha labour to global labour chains in private military and security. Titley explained in interview that he felt that he needed to give back to the Gurkha community. He felt compelled to help his former military soldiers he had spent so much time with. He also believed that private military and security would be more fitting than other economic opportunities provided to them post retirement from the British military. As such, Titley acted as Gurkhas’ spokesperson, their marketer and their manager. These new employment opportunities were openly and eagerly accepted by these Gurkha contractors as a way to financially provide for their families (Vines, 1999).

The security industry has changed significantly since the 1990s and many companies have incorporated themselves, rebranding as professional profit seeking entities and enjoying a central position in current security assemblages (Leander, 2006). This has also led to a substantial growth in their services and in turn a demand for more security contractors (Pingeot, 2012). The growth in the industry has also led to the demand for security contractors and now Indian Gurkhas and Singaporean Police Gurkhas are being employed as Gurkha security contractors within PMSCs. During interviews I conducted with different security agents in Nepal, some suggested that in non-armed security, Nepalese men and women with limited police or military backgrounds have also enjoyed employment under the ‘Gurkha’ security label. This increase use of men and women as Gurkhas in private military and security has also led to a large debate over who and what constitutes genuine Gurkhas. Both former British Gurkhas and their white Gurkha officers hold dear the definition of, and the authority to speak about who Gurkhas actually are. A central part of this definition continues to rest upon the colonial legacies of Gurkhas as martial men, rebranded in security markets in the 1990s and re-imagined again in contemporary security companies.

This is the global space in which newer companies such as FSI Worldwide and IDG Security operate and offer Gurkha labour for both unarmed and armed security. These companies describe Gurkhas through their martial virtues, harnessed through the mentoring and management of white managers who *know* these men. In other words, not only are Gurkhas positioned as subaltern underdeveloped men, British Gurkha officers are positioned as their mentors with the authority to represent and manage Gurkhas in private military and security. It is through these descriptions that Gurkha security labour becomes one part of a Gurkha package, involving the actual labour of the Gurkha alongside the management of the British Gurkha officer.

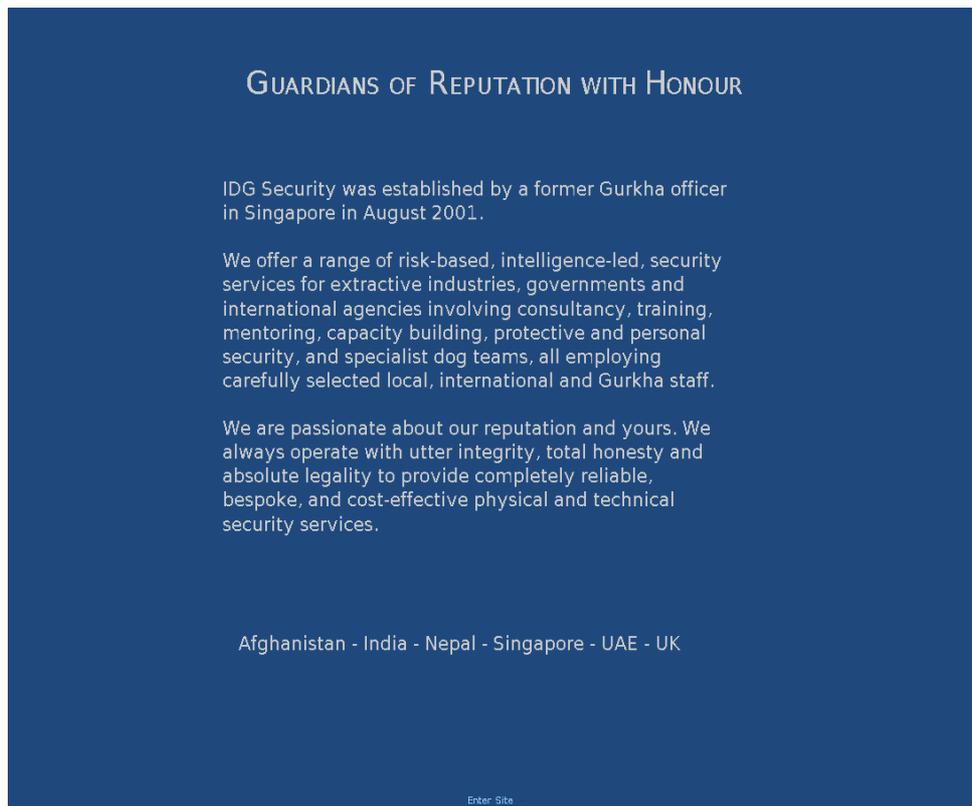


Figure 1 Snapshot of IDG Security Pte Website Home Page (Source: IDG Security, accessed on 1 September 2013)

IDG Security’s website, figure 1, is simple, with no pictures, showing only their company logo.^{xiii} In a previous version of the website (accessed on 1 July 2013) there were two brief paragraphs detailing the objectives of the company and giving contact details for potential clients to learn more about their services. The website opened with a sentence stating that the company was established and is run by a former Singaporean Police Gurkha officer. The other two paragraphs draw upon the 200 years of Gurkha service and their loyal, trustworthy and disciplined martial traits. In both versions, the website further assures the client that the security contractors are ‘genuine’ Gurkhas, who are personally selected, and indicates that the recruitment and management of these Gurkhas emulates the regimental management style. It is through proper selection, done by authority coupled with proper management, that the client will be assured of getting the best out of these Gurkhas.

The website of FSI Worldwide, another prominent security company employing Gurkhas in armed private military and security, also provides corporate imagery of their company logo in the forefront and of a flattened blue world map in the background.^{xiv} This website offers much more information and detail about the company and the Gurkhas it contracts. Like IDG Security, FSI WorldWide states that the director and management of the security company is a former British Gurkha officer. When describing the Gurkhas, the website begins with a quote from a former British Gurkha officer who served with the Gurkhas during WWI, with a profile picture of a Gurkha in traditional dress. The caption reads:

As I write these words, my thoughts return to you who were my comrades. Once more I hear the laughter with which you greeted every hardship. Once more I see you in your bivouacs or about your fires, on forced march or in the trenches, now shivering with wet and cold, now scorched by a pitiless and burning sun. Uncomplaining, you endure hunger and thirst and wounds; and at the last your unwavering lines disappear into the smoke and wrath of battle. Bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, never had country more faithful friends than you. (Sir Ralph Turner, MC)

The quote above draws upon the Gurkhas' history of resilience and determination. Below the caption is a brief paragraph indicating that FSI shares these sentiments with this former Gurkha officer. Like IDG Security, FSI WorldWide also details its commitment to genuine Gurkhas (in this case defined as Nepalese nationals who have served with the British and Indian militaries and/or the Singaporean police).

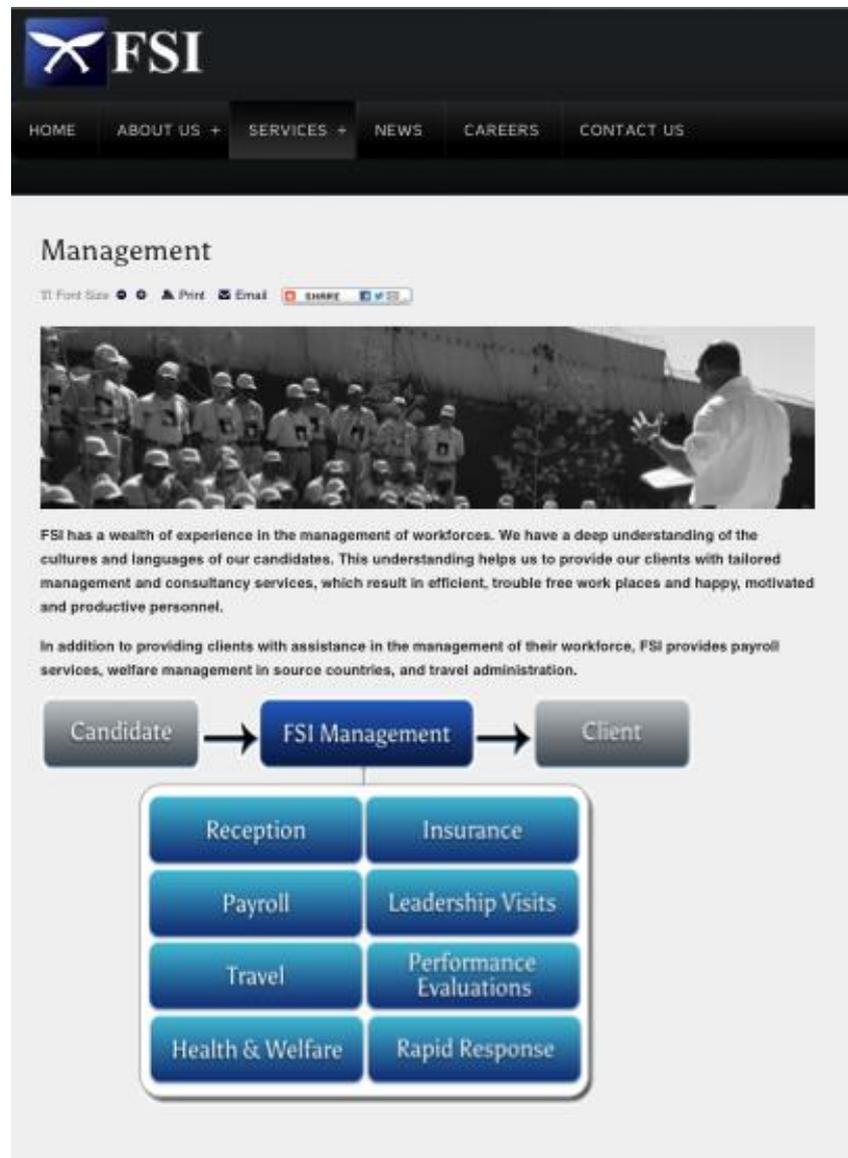


Figure 2 Snapshot of FSI WorldWide Website, Management page (Source: FSI WorldWide, accessed on 1 September 2013)

The website detailed in figure 2 further explains how the management of these Gurkhas is vital in order to get the best out of these men. This management comes from men who are familiar with and have commitment to the potential of the Gurkha. Here the company highlights their commitment to ethical recruitment practices and affirms that these practices have the ability to get the best out of everyone (non-western) as opposed to just Gurkhas. Like IDG Security, the audience is informed that it is the Gurkha officers who are in the best position to know who the genuine Gurkhas are and to manage them properly, so the client can be assured they get contractors who perform as the legendary Gurkha does.

For both companies, the directors are former British Gurkha officers and Gurkhas are still revered and marketed for their heartiness, their strength and fortitude—but also apparent is the retelling of

the British management. Drawing on this colonial past, FSI Worldwide then reinvents the Gurkha as relevant security contractors in today's security markets. Here the importance of the paternal relations between the management (often white men) and the contractor (Gurkha) are made clear.

... FSI management team understand the outstanding professionalism and dedication of a well selected and well managed Gurkha soldier. It is absolutely essential in selecting and managing a Gurkha Guard force that we have Company Directors and Project Managers who feel the way about our staff that Sir Ralph did (FSI Worldwide, 2012).

Like other globalising industries, private military and security markets depend on global South labour chains and TCN recruitment to fulfil static guard and convoy protection duties for which 'martial' labour appears to be preferred over other men from the global South (IDG Security, 2008; FSI WorldWide, 2012). In interviews and conversations, when I asked why martial men are more suitable for TCN security labour, industry practitioners and managers in Afghanistan and Nepal drew upon these men's military training and biological martial attributes, which provides them with discipline and the ability to handle (without complaint) the monotony of long hours standing in front of buildings or driving vehicles in remote (and often hostile) settings. Forster, in an interview, described the Gurkha culture which makes them more inclined to this type of labour as:

...the cultural presentation of the Gurkha is much more gentle, day to day, much more subservient, much more inclined to quietly get on with what they are doing. In certain respects that leads to the position that they are not suited for the more challenging management rolls. Static guard is a simple role in that you don't need a lot of map reading, negotiation skills. You need to follow rules, be disciplined, keep cool under fire and under boring conditions keep doing your job. I would choose an Indian army Gurkha standing post than any other person in the world. I would choose an Indian army Gurkha over an SAS man, Delta Force or Marine guy. They are not Primadonnas, they are proud to do that job and bloody good at it. I think it's really the boredom that ex pats just can't handle in the same way (interview with Forster, 1 September 2012).

Through marketing campaigns and security recruitment practices of Gurkhas, British Gurkha officers continue to enjoy a position of authority to speak for and mediate access to these exotic Gurkhas designed for western consumption. Yet, it is this authority to speak and make truth claims about the Gurkhas in private military and security markets that also acts as a site for contesting the 'regimes of value' (Huggan, 2001: 5). This struggle is nowhere more starkly observed than in the changing nature of market demands for TCNs and the broadening definition of what and who constitutes a Gurkha. The definition of Gurkha has been broadened as the desire for TCNs (largely to procure security services for a reduced rate) increases. During the 1990s, Titley primarily employed retired British Gurkhas (Titley, 2012), yet both FSI WorldWide and IDG Security have broadened definitions of 'Gurkha' to include recruiting and employing Nepalese nationals who have served with the British and Indian military and, specific to IDG Security, the Singaporean police (Gordan, 2008; FSI WorldWide, 2013). Within the unarmed security sector, procuring contracts throughout the Middle East, Hong Kong and on various cruise lines, definitions of Gurkhas are further broadening the definition and subsequent embodiment of Gurkhas in marketing schemes to also include women and Nepalese nationals with national police and military experience. Amongst security company directors, third party agents and Gurkhas interviewed, what a Gurkha is within contemporary security markets continues to be disputed.

Claiming Authority on Gurkha Security through the 'Gurkha Security Package'

These companies face different challenges to Titley. One main challenge is claiming and maintaining authority over marketing and the supply of Gurkha labour in the security industry. Both

IDG Security and FSI WorldWide are attempting to regulate the borders of Gurkhas and how the market understands them through the marketing of the *authentic* Gurkha. They do this through management and recruitment practices which intimately involve British Gurkha officers. In their business models, British Gurkha officers and their administration team understand what Gurkhas are through their military service with them, conduct rigorous vetting ensuring military qualifications of potential recruits, and mentor and manage these men in such a way as *to get the best* out of them. This marketing strategy does two things. Firstly, it assures the client that by employing an authentic Gurkha, you are getting the best TCN. Authentic Gurkhas endure hardship, they do not complain. Secondly, employing an authentic Gurkha is not enough. These men also require proper and culturally sensitive management. Management comes through the British Gurkha officer who has the history and knowledge of who these men are and how to manage them. Combatting bonded labour comes through commercial practices, whereby the client hires the 'Gurkha package'. They can then be assured that these men will be as great as their military histories claim. Reproducing colonial logics of the underdeveloped Gurkha, FSI almost reassures its potential clients that with proper management from the western man, the Gurkha can be as professional as his western counterpart. This paternal management style is marketed as a necessity to almost reassure potential clients that Gurkhas can be as good as the white standard, because they are managed properly by white people who have an intimate connection with Gurkhas. By FSI acknowledging this racial narrative within their marketing strategies, even though they create job opportunities for many retired Gurkhas, they remain implicit in perpetuating white privilege and racial hierarchies within private military and security.

IDG Security and FSI WorldWide have used the unscrupulous acts of some manpower providers (who remain unnamed, but who are always in the position of exploiting the Gurkha name/reputation) to juxtapose their own management styles and business models. Gordon described his admiration for the martial qualities of Gurkhas and his desire to re-educate his clients about the importance of getting a high quality Gurkha, attributes which he and his company could guarantee. Gordon identified in conversations with me that the security market is ill-informed about Gurkhas, treating them as just another TCN. For Gordon, Gurkhas can be just as good in providing high quality security as their western counterparts, but what is required is someone who knows these men and can properly recruit and manage them. For Gordon, this was a former British Gurkha officer. Through service as a British Gurkha officer with the Singaporean police he had intimate knowledge of who the Gurkha was and what their capabilities were. During conversations with Gordon he described his commitment to these men through his military operations. He envisioned himself as a protector of the Gurkha within the private military and security industry. He, like Tittley, positioned himself as a person who knew the Gurkhas and could not only provide economic opportunities for his former military soldiers, and other Gurkhas, thereby saving them from impoverishment, but educate the market on Gurkha security services.

It became clear through conversations with Gordon that he had a high level of commitment to employing Gurkhas and a belief in their attributes as security contractors, yet he also appeared to rely heavily on a colonial type of management style which inadvertently reproduced colonial power relations, positioning him as the white director in the position of authority. This management style was observed in one such event where Gordon was scheduled to visit Kabul. Upon his arrival the Gurkha contractors were lined up in the compound in their uniform. They saluted the director as he walked down the procession of men. He shook hands with each of them, speaking Gorkhali and exchanging pleasantries. The whole engagement reminded me of my own time in the Canadian military, where we would form up for inspection when a higher positioned officer came to visit. The security company manager, a white British man who was not wearing a particular uniform, did not form up with the Gurkhas but stood off to the side and, like myself, viewed the militaristic interactions between the director and the contracted Gurkhas. Once the 'parade' had finished, the Gurkha men politely excused themselves and the director came over to speak to the country manager and myself. We both shook his hand and escorted him into the house.

The entire spectacle did two important things. Firstly, it reproduced the hierarchical military relationship between Gurkhas as military men and the director as their officer. These Gurkhas and the director were both active participants in this performance. The Gurkha contractors were reproducing military rituals with the 'parade' greeting of their director/officer. It showcased to the country manager and myself, the spectators, the unique relationship between the director and his contracted Gurkhas, rooted in colonial histories. They spoke in Gorkhali, a colonial language, and their military formation was indicative of an intimate encounter in which we were relegated to the position of observer. Secondly, the spectacle reproduced the director as the white western officer with personal experience and understanding of Gurkhas. Like his colonial Gurkha officers, he positioned himself in a way that highlighted his authority to speak for Gurkhas and to reaffirm his white superiority and right to lead. This observation is not to indicate that all Gurkhas are managed this way. What it does highlight is how some Gurkhas experience security labour and how their welfare largely depends upon their employer's leadership.

While I did not observe the same colonial paternal management style with FSI WorldWide, Forster shared the belief in the unique positioning of British Gurkha officers in their abilities to recruit and properly manage Gurkhas. He began by establishing himself as the ideal westerner who could understand and manage Gurkhas to the best of their ability.

I guess I grew up as an ex-pat kid in amongst all sorts of different environments, whether it was Hong Kong or India, had lived overseas with different groups and loved learning languages. It just somehow felt like home to me...I guess I sort of had it in my blood in the sense. I met Gurkhas as a kid in Hong Kong and when [we] were in India and just sort of had this very strong affection for them when I had met. My parents tell a lovely story about me, whenever we went to visit the Gurkhas not seeing me, because I was off with the lads and never wanting to leave, because I enjoyed bonding with them.

Forster highlighted how colonial relations continue to be foundational in producing not only Gurkhas, but the Gurkha officers. Forster describes the training process for Gurkha officers that he went through:

... the way the brigade of Gurkhas likes to induct its officers. It goes back to the days of colonialism where you had the east African rifles, brigade rifles...you had British officers working with native troops and trying to get the best out of both parties. You didn't have the officers just standing around and giving order[s], you had them integrated in the community. It was very important for the officers to learn about the culture of where the men come from. It is taken very seriously. If you fail your language course or you don't have the personality, you don't get on well with the Gurkhas from a different culture then, similarly, you are not going to last long. It is brilliant, because you end up getting officers that are ideally suited, worthy of commanding these men (interview with Forster, 1 September 2012).

For Foster, this type of recruitment and training produced particular Gurkha officers who carried particular attributes:

[Gurkha officers] are very sensitive in the sense of really understanding how to get the best out of their men. They have equally been good at operating with local nations in whichever country you might be in. That sort of patience, [not meaning they] *don't get the job done*, there is professionalism there, but they can do it and bring the guys along with them. [Gurkha officers have a] very good leadership and management style, very fit, very dedicated, very exceptional in their thinking and attitude. [They] enjoy travel and enjoy working with other cultures. The Gurkha regiment get a lot of people applying and not that many positions, they can be picky. Just really good people generally. All of the Gurkha officers, to a man, I am very fond of today (interview with Forster, 1 September 2012).

The British Gurkha officer's particular understandings of themselves as men are key to their ability to manage Gurkhas. Importantly, both officers and the Gurkhas as male subjects are intimately connected and made intelligible through a colonial masculinity script^{xv} which positions the officer as a protector (in this case, offering economic opportunities while at the same time safeguarding Gurkhas from the harshness of the market (observed in bonded labour and exploitation). Gurkha officer and Gurkhas positions are rooted in a long shared colonial history and reproduced in performative rituals (such as Gordon's military parade). These rituals reproduce colonial and gender subjectivities, whereby the Gurkha officer is the protector/authority and the Gurkha his loyal serving soldier. They also work to exclude the participation of the outsider. These outsiders are relegated to be spectators of a colonial family reimaged and reproduced in private military and security settings.

It is then the combination of these Gurkha officer colonial and gender attributes with the martial masculine raw physical prowess Gurkha material which reappears as the Gurkha package in security markets. Forster commented on this type of raw talent and training package:

It all comes down to the training. The raw material is key and outstanding, if you are recruiting from the right areas and the right people. The trick is the training that turns that raw material into someone who is incredibly disciplined and proud, if you go into Nepal, into the hills, you will meet guys and girls, very tough, not a huge amount of discipline, not forward thinking...similar issues you would find in inhabiting developing countries...then you bring to it this tradition, this history. Had the Indian army never recruited the Gurkhas, who knows what sort of honour and bravery would have been observed today. But, certainly, wherever we've taken these guys and trained them, they have been outstanding and continue to be outstanding on military operations and peace training (interview with Forster, 28 August 2012).

In both IDG and FSI marketing strategies and through conversations, they educate their potential and current clients about how Gurkhas are not only ideal for contemporary security work, but how their background as Gurkha officers allows them the unique ability to recruit and manage these men. This type of Gurkha package appears to resonate well with the UK-based private military and security companies who use Gurkhas (or TCNs) as contractors.

As illustrated through the marketing campaigns and management schemes, Gurkhas' subjectivities are connected to a larger political modernity where these men were incapable of representing themselves. They required the white British Gurkha officer to articulate who Gurkhas are to the industry and how they need to be managed. These security practices of representation, like other racial commodities, are constituted through historical re-imagined imperial projects, and racial and gendered histories (Thrift, 2005; Agathangelou and Ling, 2009; McIlwaine, 2011). These practices say as much about Gurkhas as they do about their white managers. These men market themselves as knowing the authentic Gurkha and having the necessary managerial masculinities, rooted in ideas of culture sensitivity, to properly recruit and mentor them. Problems associated with Gurkha security are framed as management problems. The solution these men offer is finding the right men (former British Gurkha officers) to manage Gurkhas. Consequently, the racial/racist logics that perpetuate the lower value and status of Gurkhas within private military and security do not get disrupted. If anything, they are further entrenched through the Gurkha security package marketing campaign.

Differentiating Gurkhas amongst the Gurkha

The different tiers of Gurkhas demonstrate that the security subject position of Gurkha, like all postcolonial economic subjects, is a result of 'ongoing reshuffling of gender, ethnicity and

citizenship' (Sa'ar, 2005: 693) where colonial histories blend with commodification of their labour. Gurkhas' gendered histories as martial men and warriors of empire along with their contemporary consciousness of neoliberal wage earners works in complex ways in relating to security markets, respective host and home states, and to other contractors/managers within these markets.

Gurkha's labour, like other men from the global South, are desired by PMSCs because of their martial traits that appear makes them amenable to particular security work. Gurkhas labour is not founded in professional acquired skills like his expat counterpart, but is rooted in natural/biological traits. This natural/biological as opposed to professional skillsets justifies pay inequalities and racial divisions of labour—marking Gurkhas more *naturally* suited for poorly paid, dangerous and physically demanding labour. Gurkhas experiences in PMSCs are not unique but represent those of a growing number of men from the global South who take up poorly paid and unregulated work for security company owners in the global North (Maclellan, 2007; Barker, 2009; Higate, 2012; Bolatagici, 2011; Stillman, 2011). What Gurkhas experiences, and these scholarships, illustrate is that economic and social inequalities persist and continue to be founded on colonial logics, re-articulated in neoliberal security markets, of being underdeveloped men. Yet at the same time Gurkhas, and other global South men, are not the passive recipients of an imperial project, as the above writings seem to suggest. These men have agency and actively invest meaning, in varying ways, into these practices. Their agency is observed in the various ways they interact with the security market. As I have argued elsewhere some Gurkhas exercise agency through refusing to 'sell' their labour in the security market, others by seeing their participation as a short term sacrifice in order for their sons and daughters to enable themselves, through international education, to choose to be something else (Chisholm, 2013).

It is also important to acknowledge that Gurkhas, whilst largely represented in PMSCs as a homogenous group, are not qualitatively seen the same way by Gurkhas themselves or the Gurkha British officers who manage/discipline/market their labour. Increasingly as British Gurkhas are able to exercise more political and economic rights in the UK, they are becoming more distinct from their other Gurkha counterparts and also a desirable subjectivity for many Nepalese men attempting to become Gurkhas (Tamang, 2013). The reproduction of hierarchies amongst Gurkhas by Gurkhas themselves is also mirrored in PMSCs. Because of British Gurkhas ability to claim political, economic and social rights within the UK, a British Gurkha has more options (and more buy in) to neoliberal configurations of security markets. This settlement allows him to demand a larger wage within the industry as well as foster more economic opportunities within Britain. By contrast, Singaporean police Gurkhas can only remain in Singapore as long as they are employed by the State as Gurkhas. Once they are forced into retirement, they and their family must return to Nepal (Sante, 2009). Indian Gurkhas are not afforded the same relationship with the British or Singaporean states and do not have the same opportunities of learning the necessary skills to cope and embody a whiteness (in terms of proficiency in English language and business culture) that is required in neoliberal security markets. Throughout my interviews with Gurkhas, and detailed elsewhere, most of these men acceptable these market practices which rendered their experiences as Gurkhas different depending on the specific military/police they were associated with. Most of the men interviewed also believed that if they individually could master the English language and network with expats enough, they could also improve their economic and social positions within PMSCs (Chisholm, 2013).

Because of the material and political benefits afforded to British Gurkhas, they remained the most ideal subjectivity for other Gurkhas to embody. Throughout my interviews almost all the Gurkha men claimed to have tried (some numerous times) to become a British Gurkha first. If this option was not possible, both the Singaporean police and Indian Gurkhas were considered by those interviewed as the next best option. Yet even though British Gurkhas have been able to escape specific recruitment and economic vulnerabilities and use their connections with their British (and other westerners) counterparts to seek employment opportunities within the security industry they

continue to face challenges, constituted as racialised, within UK employment schemes and continue to garner less of a real wage for doing similar work to their western security contractor counterparts. In all cases, Gurkhas' relations to their home and host states, as well as how they are culturally constituted, inform the material benefits and the ways in which they participate as wage earners within private military and security. While these men all have a shared martial history with the British Empire, their contemporary relations with their respective states results in vast difference in life trajectories and opportunities.

Conclusion

In private military and security markets, value is constituted through gender and racial hierarchies established through colonial histories, whereby the skill sets of men, disproportionately white western men, command a greater market value. For all the Gurkhas, their market value is seen in their raw martial talents, but these talents required former British Gurkha officers, presently security company directors, to harness and manage them. Importantly, in this consumption practice, difference, not assimilation through a shared martial race history, becomes important in shaping Gurkhas market value and is illustrated in former British Gurkha officers/now security company owners attempts at marketing the 'Gurkha package'.

TCN labour is understood in the security industry through its lacking of western culture as well as through its colonial histories of martial race (Chisholm, 2013). They are TCNs because they come from a different (martial) culture. Culture carries on the new racism in that it, like biology, is essentialised and immutable (Barker, 1981; Balibar, 1991). TCN and expat cultures are determinate of their level of civilisation, intelligence, and in my study, security competency. Therefore, these TCNs will be unable to bridge the gap between their developing culture and the fully developed western culture. For Forster and Gordon, this gap can only be bridged through the Gurkha package, whereby Gurkhas raw talent can be managed properly by their particular white culturally competent and sensitive masculinities.

Colonialism and colonial discourse in varying ways have worked to produce differences in value and divisions of labour. These colonial discourses reappear in and through constitutions of race--embodies in the hegemonic white security contractors and within the TCN. This division of labour was justified through men and women's bodies and continues to be integral in shaping racial divisions of labour in neoliberal security practices. For postcolonial thinkers, social experiences cannot always be reduced to class or Eurocentric understanding of capital void of colonial historic accounts. However, material realities of men and women from the global South also feed into racial categories. Both race and class are dialectic. Therefore, culture and economics work in tandem to produce a variety of postcolonial economic and political subjects. Postcolonial scholars such as Zein-Elabdin (2011) and Lee (2011) have argued that postcolonial cultural studies coupled with neo-Marxist interpretations of global economic structures highlight the pervasive privilege of white western knowledge and practices, the connections between culture and economics, and experiences of how men and women from marginal economic and cultural positions negotiate and make sense of their situations. These productions of white privilege, made intelligible through colonial histories, are demonstrated by Gurkha British officers abilities to represent, manage and speak about Gurkhas to the larger private military and security industry as well as Gurkhas themselves who in various ways *buy into* these men's ability to manage their labour.

Cultural meanings and subjectivities of Gurkhas and their subsequent economic conditions within PMSCs are deeply entwined. Culture 'is a process in and by which economic meaning as well as rationality gets articulated and lived out...in a sense, meaning is always present inside the concepts and the acts of choice, labour, production and class or other economic terms' (Zein-Elabdin, 2011: 55). This is revealed in colonial legacies which inhibit Gurkhas' abilities to represent themselves

within security markets, instead relying upon their white managers and security company owners. At the same time, when this point is revealed, it is erased through Gurkhas being articulated as individuals with agency. Agency practised in their abilities to choose the limited employment options offered to them.

Market relations are constituted by attitudes towards particular notions of race and gender in which people bring life, give purpose and apply meaning to markets (Skeggs, 2004). These attitudes are what constitute value in commodity and labour: whose labour gets revealed and whose gets silenced. Importantly, within these neutral framings of individual choice, contractual agreements, and free markets, it is essential not to lose sight of the ways in which men and women are conditioned to perform particular labour and are commodified in market practices (Nevins and Peluso, 2008; Agathanglou and Turcotte, 2010; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Skeggs, 2004; Peterson, 2010; Phillips, 2011; Piper, 2011; and McDowell, 2009). The material realities for many workers coming from the global South 'who can often only exercise their agency with huge sets of constraints, imposed personally, but also by national and global economies and by nation states' (McIlwaine, 2011). For them, there is nothing particularly free about the market. But market framing of social relations remains a powerful discourse, because it obscures racial and gendered underpinnings that constitute social relations between the employee and the employer—reducing the market to a benign space where relations become a impersonal process between rational (read white and masculine) contracted individuals.

Gendered and racialised bodies within the security industry underpin the social and economic inequalities in labour and material conditions and at the same time sustain a gendered hierarchy amongst contractors. This hierarchy determines which masculinities and men are visible and which men can speak and which bodies are privileged or excluded (Chisholm, 2013). The global South contractor, labeled TCN, remains lacking and needing to be developed in order to emulate the western white contractor. This article has demonstrated the ways in which the security 'market', far from being a neutral space where individuals interact on equal footing, is underpinned by colonial histories, gender and racial scripts compelling labour to be performed in particular ways. These scripts mediate economic and social interactions between people within the security markets. They condition our understanding of TCN contractors, not as whole and complete people, but as gendered and racial commodities, whereby some carry more value than others depending on their racialised identities, their positions within metropolis/periphery economies, and their historic relations with the west.

Table of Figures

Figure 1 Snapshot of IDG SEcurity Pte Website Home Page (Source: IDG Security, accessed on 1 September 2013)

Figure 2 Snapshot of FSI WorldWide Website, Management page (Source: FSI WorldWide, accessed on 1 September 2013)

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ⁱ While the postcolonial feminist analysis I refer to is diverse in its applications, ontological positionings and discipline origins, their analyses share a commitment to engaging with particular colonial histories and postcolonial conditions that reveal the differences and hybridity in gendered, classed and racial subjectivities, economics and politics. Put simply, these scholars agree that paying immediate attention to culture, that is diversities in histories and meanings attached to capital and capital accumulation, is central to understanding the particulars of capital flow and commodification of labour.

ⁱⁱ The audience was primarily made up of military and former military serving men who now work in the security industry. There were also a few male academics working in NGOs and IOs and even a few women as academics and representatives of the international development sector.

ⁱⁱⁱ For works extolling the virtue or the rationality of the market see Friedman, M. 1962 *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press; Friedman, T. 2005 *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*, New York, NY, Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Bhagwati, J. 2004 *In Defense of Globalization*, New York: Oxford University Press; Wolf, M. 2004 *Why globalization works*, New Heaven: Yale University Press

^{iv} It is beyond the scope of this particular article to discuss the various mechanisms employed in the industry to produce particular versions of whiteness (whiteness, as all racial constructions, is varied and context specific. For important works which detail these mechanisms, see for example, Nell Irvin's (2010) *The History of White People* and Tony Ballantyne's (2002) *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* for detailed examples of how whiteness has been constructed and performed in particular ways to exercise privilege. What is important to recognise is the whiteness in general continues to be treated as one of the benchmarks/ideals defining security contractors and a tool to 'other' non-white security contractors.

^v This article uses private military and security to mean the market practices of security. Private military and security is practised within both unarmed and armed sectors where the unarmed makes up the majority of the security work globally. However, my research focuses on the global armed markets, because it provides the most lucrative work for contractors and exposes them to the most risk. It is also the area of private military and security, whereby Gurkhas are actively recruited as TCN labour. Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) refers to the actual companies that operate in these security armed markets. PMSCs provide a number of logistical and supportive roles to larger military operations, but my study focuses on Gurkha participation in what Singer (2003) refers to as the 'tip of the spear' armed security to illuminate the ways in which this area reinforces racialised (and precarious) TCN security labour.

^{vi} See Nevins and Peluso's (2008) edited volume, *Taking Southeast Asia to Market*, and Burke's (1996) *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women. Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* for detailed descriptions of the ways in which colonial legacies continue to mediate the ways in which the global South participates in global political economies.

^{vii} It is important to note that Nepal, as a state, was never officially colonised by the British. However, historic arrangements were set in place post Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-1816 which allowed the British, first informally and then through formal arrangements of the tripartite agreement of 1947, to draw upon a pool of male labourers from certain Nepalese hill communities.

^{viii} The French, the British and other western countries have used martial race logics in varying ways on the local populations of respective colonies and, in the case of the US and Canada, on their First Nation populations (Parsons, 1999; Killingray, 1999; Des Chene, 1999).

^{ix} The British initially depended on the Indian caste system (the high caste Puravias) for recruitment into their colonial armies. After this mutiny, educated Indians were seen as cowards and the uneducated were seen as brave (Sinha, 1995).

^x Sepoy refers to the Indian soldier serving in the British Indian colonial army.

^{xi} A kukri is a curved bladed knife that holds practical, symbolic and mythical value. It is a symbol associated with Gurkha martial discourse and is described as their weapon of choice in battle (Gould, 1999; Caplan 1995).

^{xii} Hardman, R (20 July 2010) The Daily Mail Online (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1296136/As-Gurkha-disciplined-beheading-Taliban-Thank-God-side.html>) accessed on 3 September 2013.

^{xiii} <http://www.idg-security.com> (accessed on 1 July 2013; 1 September 2013). Permission to reproduce this image was sought and granted by IDG security.

^{xiv} <http://www.fsi-worldwide.com> (accessed 1 July 2013; 1 September 2013). Permission was sought and granted to reproduce this image by FSI Worldwide.

^{xv} see for example Caplan (1995) chapter three “Officering Gurkhas. The Culture of Command” in *Warrior Gentlemen. “Gurkhas” in the Western Imagination* for a historical examination of how Gurkhas officers were central in the production and performativity of Gurkhas and were integral in constructing the Gurkha family; regiments who were understood as separate and exceptional from the rest of the Indian army.