Preface

As I write this preface, the world is gripped in a global health crisis. The coronavirus and the resultant COVID-19 disease are sweeping across borders, relentlessly, and affecting communities without discrimination. A fifth of the world's population has been ordered to remain under lock down with their movements severely restricted. The British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has just tested positive for the virus. And UN Secretary General António Guterres has called it a threat to humanity. More specifically, he declared that “#COVID19 is menacing the whole of humanity—and so the whole of humanity must fight back”. Western governments are leading the charge and pledging unprecedented sums to support their economies. Britain announced a \$39 billion stimulus package, Germany announced one for \$810 billion, and the United States just released its own at a staggering \$2 trillion. The private sector, too, has been enlisted in efforts to fight the virus. LVMH, the luxury goods manufacturer, transitioned to producing hand sanitizer. President Trump invoked the Defense Production Act and directed General Motors to start making ventilators. And private hotels, dorms, and other large spaces are being commandeered for makeshift hospitals to serve the increasing numbers of those needing treatment. The impact of this pandemic is significant, but it will be greater still in developing countries with less resources, and more so in those that are particularly fragile or conflict-affected. Responding to this crisis requires a truly global, multistakeholder response.

Indeed, assisting developing countries and their communities during this time will require concerted and collaborated efforts between the public and private sectors. Those efforts, however, present a Janus-faced challenge. On one hand, we will need to mobilise and rely upon private actors to take on considerably more humanitarian work that typically lies within the domain of public actors. And on the other hand, we need to ensure that those private actors are well regulated, irrespective of where they operate, and that the most vulnerable in those communities have adequate protection and access to effective remedies in the event of any harm suffered. Too often have we heard of tragic cases involving those who are meant to help and protect being the very same persons who advertently or inadvertently inflict harm to person and damage to property.

This book, which is about reform in the global private military and security industry, faces similar challenges. The need to enlist these companies con-

tinues to grow as they engage in complex and varied operations around the world. Yet, we have not yet found the best way to regulate them and to provide access to effective remedy in cases involving alleged human rights violations. The solution to this challenge needs to be global because the system is only as strong as its weakest link. Fortunately, the need for global coordination and governance to address matters with a global footprint, be it a disease or an industry, have rarely been presented so poignantly as they are today. I hope that this work on reform in the private military and security industry, while very much normative and aspirational, can contribute to critical discourse on collaboration to achieve collective good in a truly, and sometimes frighteningly, connected world.

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