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The Growth of Private Security: Trends in the European Union

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This paper provides an update of the trend towards greater private provision of policing and security services in the European Union (EU). Although data must be treated with caution, recent figures indicate growth from around 600,000 security employees in 1999 to well over a million today. To predict future trends, researchers must undertake international comparisons of the reach of private security and make a start towards drawing a comprehensive picture of the means by which security industries are best monitored and regulated in national jurisdictions. The authors argue that, in addition, issues of equality, professionalism and accountability surrounding privatized policing must become a focus of research attention by practitioners and theorists alike. *Security Journal* (2007) 20, 222–235. doi:10.1057/palgrave.sj.8350052

Keywords: international comparison; European union; policing; private security

Introduction

The commercial demand for private contract security specifically, and private policing more generally, grows steadily upwards. Those who have invested in security industries have witnessed steady growth in their earnings over the past quarter century. Paid security providers, in terms of numbers of personnel and annual expenditures at the very least, now dominate the order maintenance landscape in many nations (Bayley and Shearing, 2001). The fact that trends in private security continue so strongly today is not particularly surprising, given that the publicly funded agencies of order maintenance that evolved and grew during the 19th century development of modern policing never really eradicated the private forms of policing that had preceded them (Johnston, 1992). The upshot of this resurgence is a modern mix of public and private options and roles. There is now greater reliance on private security industries as part of overall policing strategies, or, as some would prefer to say, “governance of security” (Johnston and Shearing, 2003, p. 9). Today, private sector employees are globally recognized as vital partners in preventing and detecting crime (Stenning, 2000).

Over the last two decades, the globally observed restructuring of policing has also become more visible across the European Union (EU). Large numbers of organizations now offer a kaleidoscope of services and products including manned guarding (both “in-house” and “contract”), alarm monitoring, security equipment production, transport of cash, investigation of white-collar crime and provision of advice on risk management (George and Button, 2000; Button, 2002; Van Steden, 2004). Uniformed security guards are, by far,

the most observable exponents of private security occupations. Their presence is considerably intensified alongside the police and police-like bodies (e.g. city wardens) that are visibly deployed for safeguarding urban areas (Sarre, 2005). The “quiet revolution” in policing observed so long ago (Shearing *et al.*, 1980, p. 1) has become a noisy 21st century juggernaut.

It is remarkable, then, that the body of knowledge on the extent, powers, regulation and social impact of private security, although steadily evolving, remains relatively small. While a growing number of researchers display interest in security industry trends, the “mainstream” criminological analysis of policing is still very much limited to “traditional” criminal justice representations of “blue colored” police forces (Manning, 2005). Not to expand this body of knowledge to include private trends would be a mistake. If not handled appropriately, the phenomenon of privatization may have serious social consequences, such as segregation of communities, polarization of security availability, and social exclusion of marginalized groups. To be able to keep abreast of developments and trends, it is important, first and foremost, to sketch the growth and reach of private security in the contemporary world.

Measuring the private security industry

The private security “industry” is not some clearly defined homogenous group, but rather a multitude of industries, large and small, all related to the provision of security services, investigation, crime prevention, order maintenance, systems planning, technical consulting and security design. Often these industries are quite different from each other in structure, authority, purpose and method (Prenzler, 2005). Indeed, the sheer variety of private security occupations makes it problematic to measure “how big” the industry is (Jones and Newburn, 1995). Different experts use different definitions, which results in a rather capricious inclusion and exclusion of different security segments. In other words, it is not entirely clear what firms and services one should label “private security”. In the Netherlands, for example, some accountancy firms have set up forensic services for clients, and offer private detective work, while other security companies undertake activities such as limousine hiring or facility management alongside their security activities. The private security industry thus flows into a large variety of markets, making accurate classification and counting very difficult.

Additionally, the quality of available official statistical sources varies considerably from country to country. Sound information is difficult to obtain in some jurisdictions due to gaps in official employment registrations that do not differentiate between full-time and part-time personnel. This lack of clarity leads to some estimates clearly *over*-stating “private” workforce numbers. On the other hand, however, many “in-house” security staff (especially those who are performing more than one role) may not be counted in official estimates, so it can also be argued that the manpower of private security is actually *under*estimated. Moreover, most private firms do not like to advertise their market share, revenues or personnel numbers and are therefore unlikely to divulge information to researchers. Nonetheless, there is consensus among observers about the mounting pervasiveness of private security in many countries. Previous comparative research clearly indicates the substantial contribution of security companies to internal security within the EU (Ottens *et al.*, 1999; Van Ouirve, 1999; Van Steden and Huberts, 2005; Jones and Newburn, 2006). That trend appears set to continue.

The EU today

In the 1999 volume of the *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, Jaap de Waard, a Dutch civil servant, published the first major English language international study of private security services (PSSs) covering 27 countries (i.e., all 15 EU members at the time plus 12 others) (De Waard, 1999). It was based upon reports from the European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs in 1996. De Waard estimated that there were 592,050 security personnel in Europe in a population of 369 million. That meant that there were 160 security personnel per 100,000 population, compared to 375 public police per 100,000. He further estimated that 75 per cent of security personnel worked for contract firms, with the remainder “in-house”. De Waard found very large variations in personnel numbers between countries. Great Britain and Germany had the most security personnel, with 275 per 100,000 and 217 per 100,000, respectively. Finland and Greece had the lowest proportions with 69 and 19, respectively. Overall, his article indicated that, in indicative terms only, police still outnumbered security personnel in the EU by a rough estimate of 2:1.

On 1 May 2004, the EU-Member states grew from 15 to 25 as Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia entered the Union. This radically altered the private security landscape. The international picture painted by De Waard requires revision. Even taking into account the problems of measuring accurately personnel numbers, based on our estimates below, we conclude that there are well over one million people employed in private security industries in the EU today. Drawing on De Waard’s figure of almost 600,000 employees in 1999, this amounts to an increase of some 500,000 employees across EU-Member states in less than a decade. The police/private security ratio, too, has moved up to 1 to 0.71 overall in 2004, compared to the EU average of 1 to 0.43 in 1999 (De Waard, 1999, p. 156).

The information presented in Table 1 provides a statistical snapshot of the EU today. It is based upon a report published by the Confederation of European Security Services (CoESS)¹ and Uni-Europa² (Morré, 2004). The figures are drawn from employment data in the public and private policing sector. In the pages that follow, we consider these figures in the light of information from a variety of sources.

Scandinavia

We begin with a discussion of Denmark, Finland and Sweden. These countries have, in absolute and relative terms, small private security industries. A plausible explanation for this might be the traditionally low crime rates officially reported in Scandinavian countries. Furthermore, as De Waard (1999, p. 167) notes, the Danish police, historically, do not enter into so-called commercial public-private partnerships. The Danish government is reluctant to cooperate with security services, although, remarkably, two of the largest multi-national security firms in Europe (Falck and Securitas) were founded in Denmark and

¹ CoESS was founded in 1989 as an umbrella organization for national associations of private security industries www.coess.org.

² Uni-Europa is part of an international Union network, www.uni-europa.org.

Table 1 Police forces and private security services in 25 EU-Member States

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total police</i>	<i>Total private security</i>	<i>Private security/ population ratio</i>	<i>Private security/ police ratio</i>
Austria	30,000	6,790	1/1,208	0.23
Belgium	39,000	18,320	1/562	0.47
Cyprus	3,000	1,500	1/517	0.50
Czech Republic	47,400	28,100	1/363	0.59
Denmark	14,000	5,250	1/1,010	0.38
Estonia	3,600	4,900	1/286	1.36
Finland	7,500	6,000	1/867	0.80
France	145,000	117,000	1/516	0.81
Germany	250,000	170,000	1/485	0.68
Greece	49,900	25,000	1/428	0.50
Hungary	40,000	80,000	1/125	2.00
Ireland	12,000	20,000	1/195	1.67
Italy	280,000 ^a	55,000	1/1,056	0.20
Latvia	10,600	5,000	1/460	0.47
Lithuania	20,000	10,000	1/360	0.50
Luxembourg	1,573	2,200	1/210	1.40
Malta	1,800	700	1/572	0.39
The Netherlands	49,000	30,000	1/543	0.61
Poland	103,309	200,000	1/193	1.94
Portugal	46,000	28,000	1/375	0.61
Slovakia	21,500	20,840	1/259	0.97
Slovenia	7,500	4,500	1/444	0.60
Spain	193,450	89,450	1/450	0.46
Sweden	18,000	10,000	1/530	0.56
United Kingdom	141,398	150,000	1/401	1.06
Total	1,535,530	1,088,550	1/410	0.71

Source: Morr  (2004).

^aThis number is based on De Waard's (1999) estimate of the Italian police force numbers, because of missing data in the CoESS report.

Sweden, respectively. The latest figures indicate that there may be over 5,000 private security personnel in Denmark (for a ratio of 1 to 0.38, police to private security) and double that number in Sweden, for a not dissimilar ratio of 1 to 0.56.

Finland has a higher level of private security in comparison with its police force while, per head of population, it has fewer security personnel (1 per 867) than Sweden (with 1 per 530). Finland's *Act on Private Security Services* (along with supplementary decrees) governs several "guarding" and "protection" sectors. We find the same kind of regulatory systems in Denmark. Sweden's regulatory regime covers most private security areas except alarm stations, in-house security and cash-in-transit (CIT) and has been applauded as a regime that is worthy of replication (Meacher, 2002). In Sweden and Finland, but not in Denmark, firearms carriage is permitted with special authorization.

Because Norway and Iceland are outside the EU, they are not discussed in the latest CoESS statistics. This makes it hard to provide sound information. De Waard (1999, pp. 155, 157) found 4,000 to 5,000 Norwegian security employees, but there are no current

and reliable figures available on the private security industry in either of these two nations. For the record, according to publicly accessible data sources, Norway and Iceland employ 11,000³ and 700⁴ police officers, respectively.

Western Europe

Germany, the United Kingdom and France are indisputably the leaders in Western Europe in providing PSSs. As seen in Table 1, in sheer numbers, Germany takes the first position with approximately 170,000 personnel. Informed estimates place the number of employees in the U.K. (including Northern Ireland) much higher than the 150,000 reported by the sources available to Morr . For example, Button (2002, p. 99) arrives at a figure of 217,000 private security staff. Jones and Newburn in 1995 counted over 300,000 people engaged in private policing occupations (1995, p. 229). Even on the lower number, police officers are outnumbered by private security in the U.K. by a ratio of 1 to 1.06. In France, the ratio is 1 to 0.81 and in Germany slightly lower at 1 to 0.68.

Germany has implemented trade regulation laws that apply to security enterprises, but legal standards are also embedded in other legislation. Training and education are provided by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and by professional organizations. Specialized private security personnel (e.g. guards at military installations) are allowed to carry guns.

In France, privatized policing strategies have gained firm ground, but comparisons with public police are difficult. CoESS probably underestimates the French public policing system (145,000), for previous studies show a police strength of at least 220,000 officers (De Waard, 1999, p. 155; Ottens *et al.*, 1999, p. 81; Ocqueteau, 2006, p. 66). Ocqueteau (2006, p. 74) maintains that private security does not challenge the sovereign role of police and the gendarmerie. Rather, commercial security supplements the state's security resources and is rarely perceived to be equal to its traditional public forces. In 1983 and 1984, statutory regulations were issued in France to guarantee better supervision over the security industry and to improve the quality of private guarding, surveillance and protection. Recent figures indicate that the average age of (predominantly) male security employees is trending downwards, which might signal a slow but sure professionalization of the sector (Ocqueteau, 2006, pp. 68–69).

Legislation for the private security sector in the United Kingdom did not exist until relatively recently. Private guards, investigators and door supervisors relied upon voluntary self-regulation (Button, 2002). In 2001, however, the English parliament passed the *Private Security Industry Act*. It was a first attempt to regulate contract and in-house security guards, the CIT sector, private investigators, wheel clampers, security consultants and bodyguards. Its main contributions were the introduction of a licensing system and the creation of a Security Industry Authority (SIA) to monitor the quality and legitimacy of security industry services.

The Republic of Ireland has a large private security presence (approximately 20,000 strong) and its ratio of police to private security indicates that the former are well outnumbered by the latter (1 to 1.67). The number of private personnel per head of population

³ See www.politi.no.

⁴ See <http://logreglan.is>.

(1 per 195) is one of the highest in Europe. Yet Ireland was one of the few countries in which detailed legal standards for the industry did not exist until 2004 with the passage of the *PSSs Act*.

In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, there are more private security personnel than police officers (a ratio of 1 police officer to 1.4 security officers) and the overwhelming majority of these are in full-time roles. Possible explanations for this are the fairly large banking sector and the importance of EU institutions (e.g. the Court of Justice) based in Luxembourg. With regard to the private security/population ratio, the Austrian rate is the lowest in Europe at one private officer per 1,208 population. Nevertheless, there are 200 companies (on 2003 figures) active in Austria, employing 6,790 people. The annual turnover of €200 million (2001) is steadily increasing by 2–3 per cent per year. While there are no specific laws for the Austrian security market, there are general commercial laws with relevance to specialized (guarding) companies. Like Norway and Iceland, Switzerland lies outside the EU. It employed roughly 7,000 private security workers in 1999 (De Waard, 1999, p. 155) but there are no recent figures available.

Belgium and the Netherlands have moderately sized private security industries. The ratio of police to private security personnel (1 to 0.47 and 1 to 0.61, respectively) is quite similar. Morré's estimates of the Dutch police strength appear somewhat low as she fails to count some officers working for special police forces such as the National Police Agency and the Military Police (Van Steden and Huberts, 2006, pp. 24–25). Estimates on the Dutch security industry vary between 27,000 to over 30,000 people, depending on what one considers "private security". Technical equipment services are, for example, often omitted from official figures. Drawing on information from UNETO-VNI, a professional trade association, this sector consists of at least 335 companies, comprising 6,500 people and generating €810 million per year. A noticeable trend is that technical equipment services are increasingly offered in conjunction with manned guarding services. Representatives of both sectors have lately taken part in the activities of the Union of Private Security Organizations (Van Steden and Huberts, 2006, p. 21). Both Belgium and the Netherlands have laws that regulate the industry beyond manned guarding, and include private detectives, alarm monitoring systems, the CIT sector and "in-house" security workers in their purview. Dutch and Belgian laws also include strict regulation of uniforms, training and criminal background checks. Contrary to the situation in the Netherlands, however, some Belgian guards are permitted to carry firearms. The Dutch division of Group 4 Securicor has been granted permission to provide custodial services to detention centers, which puts the company in a unique business position.

Central and Eastern Europe

The collapse of socialist bureaucracies and the consequent sale of state assets since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 have presumably contributed to the spectacular growth of private security in former Soviet bloc or Warsaw Pact countries (Brodeur *et al.*, 2003, p. 6). Central and Eastern EU-Member states have also reportedly suffered from waves of criminal activity within their borders, providing another incentive for those who can afford to seek supplementary policing (Caparini and Marenin, 2005). Countries like the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia are now witnessing strong growth in private security

markets. Other Central and Eastern European EU-Member states have also seen a considerable rise in the number of new private security and protection agencies. In Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary and Poland, private security personnel now match or exceed their police numbers. In the case of Poland and Hungary, the number is double the police number. According to CoESS, the yearly financial turnover is massive, for example, €40 million in Estonia (2001 figures) and €933 million in Poland.

The monitoring of private security in these regions is best described as a “work in progress”. Two of the Baltic states, Estonia and Latvia, regulate manned guarding services and related areas by their respective Security Acts. Lithuania has implemented a law on individuals and property safety. The same trends are observed in most of the newly admitted EU-Member States. Except for the Czech Republic, all governments have instigated specific legal guidelines addressing private security. Requirements such as criminal background checks, identification cards and special permission to carry handguns are standard and, in some cases, mandatory (e.g., Czech guards). The Czech Republic and Slovenia offer university training for both public policing and private policing. Police practitioners and students seeking a career in various (governmental) security agencies are taught at the Police Academy in Prague and the College of Police and Security Studies in Ljubljana.

Southern Europe

There is a relatively low private security/police ratio in Southern European countries. In Greece, for example, a security market barely existed until 1997 (Rigakos and Papanicolaou, 2003, p. 298). At present, however, there may be as many as 25,000 to 30,000 private security personnel, which represents about half the number of police officers. Legislation was introduced in 1997 to mandate a number of requirements covering security licensing, uniforms, training and dogs. The license holder’s criminal record must be checked and he/she is obliged to have joined the national army. Elsewhere Papanicolaou (2006, pp. 87–89) delves into the Greek private detective market. This security niche consists of about 120, often small, agencies, and has a history that is over 50 years. Detective work involves commercial fraud investigations and inquiries into family matters, but various investigation firms also sell and install technical security devices. In 2003, private detective agencies were brought under existing regulatory legislation. Police in Italy employ 280,000 public police officers, which is five times the number of estimated private security agencies’ numbers. Likewise, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal and Spain make more use of police officers than security guards. Nevertheless, with the exception of Cyprus (which has a draft law currently before the Parliament), these governments have provided comprehensive governing frameworks to achieve some form of regulation of private policing options.

Elsewhere in the region

Seen from an international perspective, the renaissance of private security in the EU is not exceptional. The resurgence of private forms of security is a worldwide phenomenon (Wood and Kempa, 2005). The following information, as represented in Table 2, offers a useful insight into private security in nations proximate to, but outside, the EU, and allows some preliminary comparisons to be drawn.

Table 2 Private security services in Eastern European countries or entities

<i>Eastern Europe</i>	<i>Private security force</i>
Albania	4,100
Bosnia and Herzegovina	±2,000
Bulgaria	130,000
Croatia	±15,000
Kosovo	2,580
Macedonia	3,000
Moldova	3,000–10,000
Montenegro	1,900–2,400
Romania	37,291
Serbia	±30,000
Russia	>850,000

Sources: Volkov (2002) and SEESAC (2005).

South Eastern Europe

The growth of private security companies in South Eastern Europe is probably a direct result of perceptions of a growing “market of violence” in the region (Eppler, 2002). But there are some misgivings over the response. In Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania, concerns have been raised relating to the (mis)use of weapons, including automatic weapons, by private security. Croatia is more stable, but in this country there have been allegations that private security companies financially support political parties in the hope of receiving special favors. The Moldovan security industry is relatively small. Most strikingly, in the province of Transdniestria, a tiny corner near the Ukraine border, one security company dominates the market. In Romania, along with Bulgaria, the situation has improved drastically over the last decade. These countries host the most developed and professional security industries in the region. However, issues such as the absence of democratic oversight, ineffective implementation of legislation and rivalry between police forces and security companies are of major concern to observers (SEESAC, 2005).

Russia

The collapse of the Soviet Union and a “hidden” private security legacy prior to the break-up have both contributed to the dramatic expansion of the private security market in Russia (Favarel-Garrigues and Le Huérou, 2004). This market is generally divided between detective agencies, PSSs and private protection companies (PPCs). In 1999, statistics indicated that almost 200,000 licensed employees (i.e., those who are entitled to carry a firearm) are working for PSSs and PPCs, but the total number probably exceeds 850,000 (Volkov, 2002, p. 137). Not unlike the position in South Eastern Europe, regulatory structures for the private security industry are weak in Russia. Despite a 1992 federal law on private detective and protective activity (which gave legal status to the commercial provision of security), business relations are still highly informal. This informality has a negative impact on the transparency and accountability of the industry.

Transnational private security

Although the above numbers are somewhat tentative, it is clear that there has been momentous growth in the provision of PSSs in the EU since 1999. One can assume that there are a number of factors for this rise, not only “natural growth” and by virtue of the addition of new Member States, but also by a belief that PSSs are an appropriate means by which to deal with perceptions of growing lawlessness generally, or associated with the move to market economies following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This “marketization” or “commodification” of policing has also allowed for, if not encouraged, the development of transnational security firms. Giant multinationals such as the Securitas Group and Group 4 Securicor have enabled a “globalization” of commercialized security provision to develop (Johnston, 2000; Walker, 2003). The latter transnational security firm, for example, employs 340,000 staff, operates in 108 countries and generates a yearly turnover of £3.8 billion (€5.69 billion).⁵ Moreover, a diversity of commercial security activities is penetrating into national and sub-national institutions such as fire departments, ambulance services, car assistance services, custodial services and even military operations. Group 4 Securicor reports that their officers are providing round-the-clock protection for U.S. troops in Kosovo.⁶ One can, accordingly, safely predict that transnational private security will play a fundamental and progressively expanding role in securing business and local (urban) domains in the future.

Discussion and critique

It is the final purpose of this paper to review some of the possible social policy consequences of the trend to privatization of policing services in Europe and beyond. There are three main lines of the critiques comprising (1) the exclusionary mandate of private security staff, (2) the poor professional image of the industry and (3) the paradoxes stemming from the public/private security provision divide. These issues will be discussed in turn.

A common objection against private security personnel is that they are, by legal contract, required to act in an exclusionary manner, and will selfishly protect only those who can afford them, to the detriment of the common good. In other words, the availability of private security in an open market place allows privileged individuals and organizations to buy more protection than their less-privileged counterparts. Indeed, the so-called “gated communities”, “closed areas” or “security enclaves”, territorially divided from apparently poor and “dangerous” neighborhoods, have emerged in the U.S.A. (Davis, 1990), Brazil (Wood and Cardia, 2006) and South Africa (Minnaar, 2005) if not elsewhere. Social exclusion has long been recognized as a tool to keep “troublesome” people out of publicly accessible space (Von Hirsch and Shearing, 2000). Hoogenboom (1991), too, points out that private security may become part of dystopian “grey policing networks” that deeply penetrate into human associations and serve the interests of wealthy and ruling elites, running counter to the social bonds that many would assert are essential to security. Private security guards are, after all, paid by those who potentially agree on policing activities in favor of their own

⁵ See www.group4securicor.com.

⁶ See Group 4 Securicor International Magazine (October, 2004).

priorities rather than serving the community's best interest (Shearing and Stenning, 1983; Prenzler, 1998, 2004).

It is possible, however, to reconcile private security and the concerns of those who would lament the exclusivity that it may engender. That is, it can be safely argued that private security and social justice are not mutually exclusive (Prenzler, 2004, p. 277). For example, Dutch government programs to reduce disorder on public transport previously employed (sworn-in) commercial guards as conductors and guardians at train stations and on the tram and metro system. Similarly, municipalities increasingly hire paid security workers in the Netherlands (Terpstra and Havinga, 2005) as lowly paid replacements for police officers in the enforcement of "small nuisances" such as illegal parking.

A subsequent criticism relates to the low professionalism and effectiveness of security agencies. Despite the "higher profile" of security sectors such as forensic accountancy, private security guards, who represent the most dominant and visible face of the industry, are often regarded as incompetent, amoral, corrupt and shady "wannabe" cops (Livingstone and Hart, 2003; Prenzler, 2004, p. 284). The nature of this popular representation of the industry is fueled by North American studies on private security, which portray guards (but also investigative personnel) as aging, marginally paid, poorly educated and hastily trained males, many of whom have a criminal record or an association with dubious characters (Kakalik and Wildhorn, 1971). Notwithstanding that private security continues to suffer from this doubtful image, some transnational companies and industry associations are, in theory at least, trying to enhance the quality of services delivered by promoting an image of a sector that is able to self-regulate and to distance itself from the more unsavoury players (O'Connor *et al.*, 2004). A further tool in this process is state legislation designed to monitor the private security industry and to improve its services. The legal standards within the EU are, however, diverse and sometimes lax. In response, CoESS, the European umbrella for national industry associations, is exploring ways of harmonizing the requirements of the different national legal systems. It has been endeavoring to set minimum norms and requirements, which, it argues, are important in providing public assurances that companies associated with CoESS are professional and trustworthy throughout the Union.

The third and last point of criticism relates to the persistence of several awkward paradoxes that continue to shadow the private security industry (Zedner, 2003). Closely related to the problem of "defensive reassurance" mentioned above, one paradox is that with increasing security options at our disposal, we are not necessarily any safer. While the pragmatic logic of "risk-based thinking" – of calculation, anticipation and pro-action – aims, or at least claims, to forestall crime and reduce (feelings of) insecurity, in fact it breeds ever more anxiety among people. When people retreat from wider society into their fortified, feudal-like enclaves, there is no guarantee that their feelings of anxiety and unease will be lessened (Merriam, 1981, pp. 194–196). On the contrary, a significant consequence of privatized police auspices is that they engage in risk-reduction activities, but at the same time take advantage of crime panics. The persistency of insecurity may be a challenge for the private security industry, but it also legitimizes it (George and Button, 2000, p. 35). Ironically, for reasons of their "own safety", citizens are constantly alerted to dangers, with potentially negative consequences. It is, in other words, an idle hope that societies will ever be able to eliminate insecurity and crime. Claims that this is possible in a world of market-driven competition for the best security product are, at best, misleading and, at worst, dangerous.

A final paradox is that the upsurge of private security has arguably expanded rather than diminished the penal state. That is, the privatization of policing has extended the state apparatus of criminal justice despite the neo-liberal rhetoric of “rolling back the state”. Rising private security demands for regulatory bodies that oversee, license and audit the industry in turn generate a whole new complex of coordinators, managers and regulatory inspectors. Far from diminishing, the institutional architecture of crime control strengthens its position in society (Garland, 2001, p. 170). This paradox has ramifications for democratic societies as a whole and their citizens in particular. Notwithstanding that security, in the positive and inclusive sense, promises universal freedom from damage, loss, stigmatization and condemnation, the pursuit of “full” reassurance has an all-too-strong tendency towards undesired, even perverse outcomes. The collective desire for security, if not handled appropriately, can easily derail in a policing culture that infringes unfairly upon civil liberties and, ultimately, undermines the face-to-face relations of trust and solidarity on which a well-ordered society is built.

With this, then, the importance of good governance comes into prominence. The diversification and pluralization of policing and the mushrooming of private security industries has given rise to the necessity of coordination in the form of oversight, management and control to avoid a counterproductive, unjust and overzealous distribution of services. However, in the context of the EU’s preoccupation with liberalization and deregulation, the nationally institutionalized “statutory controls” of private security may be altered or replaced by greater emphasis on industry self-regulation and accountability through “market forces” in the future. Yet, as Sarre and Prenzler (1999) note, self-regulation, done properly, has great advantages for national industry associations and industry “ombudsmen”. The scope of this accountability mechanism is limited, however, as not all business and companies are affiliated with them.

Furthermore, the use of self-regulation instruments (e.g., quality marks and codes of conduct) also requires an external watchdog to “guard the guards” and intervene where necessary. There is convincing evidence that the market economy, specifically in a growth industry, is not capable of taking out suspect and poorly functioning companies. Keen competition may, in fact, force margins down to the point where companies are strongly motivated to undercut competitors by paying under-award wages and misrepresenting service levels (Prenzler, 1998). Researchers and policy-makers should be turning their gaze to appropriate and effective models of cooperation and regulation in which all players who participate in policing networks are represented. The state, despite trends towards “privatization” and “Europeanization”, has a key role to fulfill, as it is responsible for balancing commercial and public interests in a way that best serves social issues of equality, democracy, fairness and performance.

Some final remarks

The present shifts towards private options in policing are likely to continue apace across the EU. Commercial integration and the freedom to move goods, capital and services across Europe to Asia are becoming increasingly more common and there is little reason to suspect that there will not be a similar integration of security services. This “Europeanization” of

industry, commerce and trade pushes private security and private policing options to the fore. In spite of such integration, the legal regulation of private security varies significantly from country to country. Many questions about public supervision of private security personnel in the EU and beyond remain largely unanswered.

Governments cannot shirk their responsibilities to coordinate security and policing, whether it is publicly or privately funded. Governments must, instead, serve as central anchor points to facilitate, direct and safeguard all policing activities including multi-agency networking to ensure efficacy, equity, legality, responsibility and accountability within the private security sector (Loader and Walker, 2001).

In the longer term, governments should also commit to developing and adapting laws and regulations to match the changing realities of policing, so that they do not remain framed in terms of a concept of policing (essentially public policing) that is no longer valid. In other words, as the more diverse forms of policing develop, the laws of rights and responsibilities, powers and immunities need to change accordingly (Sarre and Prenzler, 2005, p. 217).

One strategy could involve bringing all “policing” practices under the control of democratic institutions such as commissions, citizen boards and other “watchdogs” at local, regional, provincial and national levels to ensure that they are not acting in a fashion that is counter-productive to the desired outcomes (Jones, 2005). If this can be achieved, countries of the EU will be better able to claim that their citizens are not only enjoying a satisfactory level of protection, but are doing so in an open and equitable manner.

Conclusion

Policing arrangements in the EU are diverse, complex and multifaceted, which requires researchers to shed light on the shapes, sizes and legal systems of essentially commercial security industries, both national and transnational. The democratic state, far from remaining aloof from the described trends, has a key role to play. It is the primary guarantor of collective security interests. This axiom should be borne in mind as the trend towards private provision of security in the EU continues strongly into the future.

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