Reviews

Private Security and Public Policing

by Trevor Jones and Tim Newburn

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(288 pages, £40.00)

Reviewed by Deborah Michael

This is an ambitious book, that aims to consider a broad range of subjects with regard to both public and private policing. A refreshing mixture of theoretical discussion and new empirical research is provided; until relatively recently there has been all too little of the latter in the UK (as the authors have noted elsewhere). Overall, *Private Security and Public Policing* introduces some interesting and challenging new ideas, and is an essential and important book for anyone who is interested in the contemporary private security industry in the UK, whether as practitioner, academic or policy maker.

The book is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One is entitled 'The Sociology of Policing' and, as an introduction, describes much of the literature in this area and attempts to identify the core function of public constabularies. In doing so, it considers that the term 'policing' is a notoriously difficult concept to define, and because of this, provides a broad working definition, linked in many ways to wider concepts of social control, as a reference point for the term 'policing' in the remainder of the book.

Chapter Two, entitled 'The Public-Private Dichotomy', then aims to provide a more coherent theoretical framework, in order to bring greater understanding to the vast number of agencies or organisations to which a 'policing' function can be attributed. In the process, the concepts of 'public' and 'private' are considered in some depth, and in conclusion the authors suggest that, although problematic, the terminology for the 'public-private' divide in policing should not be abandoned.

Chapter Three moves away from theoretical discussion and provides an analysis of what is commonly perceived as the private sector in policing, the 'private security industry'. Following a similar pattern to South² and Johnston,³ the industry is divided into three broad categories, namely 'staffed services', 'security equipment' and 'investigation services'. This is an important chapter, which considers the vast difficulties in measuring the security industry in the UK. It also provides important new empirical information about the number of personnel employed and companies operating in security. This is drawn from the authors' own survey, based in turn on information from the Labour Force Survey, the British Telecom Database and a national telephone survey.

Chapter Four is entitled 'The Growth of Private Security' and is directly linked to the attempt, in the previous chapter, to measure the size and activities of the security industry; it asks a key question, namely whether there has been a growth in the security industry in the UK. It is very often assumed that there has been such a growth, not least because of the much more visible

presence of contract security officers in contemporary society, particularly noticeable from the late 1980s onwards. This chapter first considers theories behind the reasons for a growth in the use of private security, and then issues a provocative challenge as to whether there is tangible evidence for a 'rebirth' of private policing in the UK in recent years.

Chapters Five and Six are entitled 'Policing Bodies in Wandsworth' and 'Policing Wandsworth in Practice' respectively, and move away from the more global discussion about the security industry per se by providing a case study approach, describing some of the different 'hybrid' and private policing bodies at work in the London Borough of Wandsworth. These chapters provide a concrete example of many of the points and discussions brought forward in the previous chapters, particularly the relationship between public and private policing bodies, explanations for the rise in private policing, and the nature and implications of public and private justice.

Chapter Seven is entitled 'The Boundaries of Public and Private Policing' and Chapter Eight (the final chapter) 'Making Sense of the Policing Division of Labour'; they reconsider some of the issues addressed at the outset of the book. Returning to the working definition of policing in Chapter One, Chapter Seven considers policing as a 'multi-dimensional concept', and four crucial boundaries in public and private policing are discussed, namely sectoral, spatial, legal and functional. Chapter Eight then contemplates current issues in contemporary policing, and the recent history and immediate future of policing in the UK. Whatever the future may or may not hold for the public police, as Jones and Newburn point out, it is with the Home Office police that the power of non-negotiable force currently remains.

Notes

- 1 Jones, T. and Newburn, T. (1995) How Big is the Private Security Sector? *Policing and Society*. Vol. 5, No. 3, p 221.
- 2 South, N. (1988) *Policing For Profit*. London: Sage.
- 3 Johnson, L. (1992) *The Rebirth of Private Policing*. London: Routledge.

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