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Rebuilding the Foundations of Security

Introduction
This chapter will set out an agenda of reforms that can rebuild the foundations of security. As with the rest of the book this discussion will centre around the UK, although much also applies to other countries. The chapter will begin by considering ways in which regulation can be strengthened to improve the quality of the private security industry. It will then look at the creation of an appropriate professional infrastructure that could produce a more professional means of doing security. In particular, we argue here for a new model of security management – ‘Security Risk Management’. Finally the chapter explores the more contentious issue of security inequity and sets out a framework utilising ‘security unions’ to tackle this.

Introducing effective regulation
It is important to recall that security services and equipment are often a grudge cost and that purchasers will often take the cheapest option (George and Button, 2000). In unregulated markets this provides an incentive to lower costs and standards of security in order to win business. If one supplier is charging X, the supplier who can offer X minus Y will in many cases win the contract, even if the reduction has been achieved by lowering the number of days training, the quality of supervision, wages and so on. This creates a ‘Dutch Auction’ where the next supplier then wins the contract by offering X minus Y minus Z and lowering standards further. It is for this and other reasons (see Button and George, 2006) that many countries have introduced statutory regulation to set minimum standards below which the market will not
fall. The effectiveness of these different regulatory systems varies considerably. George and Button (1997) and Button and George (2006) identify the key characteristics and most effective models of the regulation of private security. I do not intend to go over these models in depth again here, but the broad principles of them are briefly set out below.

The first key principle should be that regulation applies to the wider private security industry. There are many sectors in the private security industry, covering, among others, occupations such as security officers, security managers, door supervisors, close protection officers, security managers, private investigators, security consultants, installers of security equipment and locksmiths, employed either contractually or in-house. For the benefits of regulation to be fully felt it should apply to all of these. Covering the whole of the industry also reduces the risks of leaving loopholes which the unscrupulous could exploit. As Chapter 5 revealed, in the UK the failure to implement regulation of ‘security consultants’ has already led to some criminals exploiting this weakness to establish a role in the private security industry.

The second major principle of regulation is that it should be deep. Regulatory systems vary a great deal in terms both of their depth of regulation and the most effective mandatory standards for firms and employees. For employees, the best regimes mandate standards beyond character. Standards should also cover minimum levels of competence and staff training. They should also apply to the firm as well as the employee. Thus the licensing system should be for employees and firms. Only with licensing of both can regulation make the private security industry truly accountable. Putting an employee’s or a firm’s licence at stake – with some form of sanction for non-compliance – provides a much greater incentive to comply. These two criteria underpin the ‘comprehensive wide’ model of regulation in which regulations apply to the wider private security industry, to both firms and employees, and where the standards set cover quality-enhancing criteria.

Another important element is the degree of compliance towards the regulation. There are significant differences in the culture of compliance and degree of enforcement in different jurisdictions and amongst different occupations (Hyde, 2003; Lister et al., 2001). Therefore, what on paper might seem like a ‘comprehensive wide’ system might turn out to be much less effective when analysed in terms of the degree of compliance. Unfortunately there has not been a great deal of research on compliance with regulation. In the absence of such research all that