

Securing the European ‘Homeland’: Profit, Risk, Authority
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Summary of “Securing the European ‘Homeland’: Profit, Risk, Authority” – Marijn

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This thesis explores the commercialization of security in Europe as part of the emerging securitization of everyday life, particularly in the context of the war on terror. The thesis focuses on the performative constitution of the European market for homeland security equipment and the growing involvement of homeland security firms in defining and enacting security. These developments have been understudied as most debates in the academic literature on private security have been concerned with the role of private military companies in conflict areas or in states where the public sector is underdeveloped. But, the thesis is not only an empirical enterprise, however important it is: by widening the empirical lens to include non-militarized forms of private security, the analysis anchors the study of private security more explicitly in recent academic debates about the role and implications of preemptive risk after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The core research questions are the following: what are the security concepts that motivate the growth market for homeland security applications and the growing involvement of commercial security actors in Europe? How are these newly emerging actors involved in the construction of preemptive risk and in the daily governing of threats? How can we make sense of the emerging alliances between the commercial world and public security authority beyond weak states?

With the notion of preemption, I refer to security practices that aim to act on threats that are recognized to be irreducibly speculative and impossible to detect or forecast, and that require security intervention at the earliest possible stage. Today, the logic of speculative or preemptive security has been brought into the most mundane and prosaic spaces. From the diverse worlds of risk-management consulting, software design, forensics, and data visualization, the practices of the war on terror, as Louise Amoore explains, exceed any clear distinction between military/civil/commercial spheres. It is precisely in this context that we should understand the increased engagement with expertise in the commercial realm, and the emergence of Didier Bigo (2004) describes as “managers of

unease." These are the public and private security professionals involved in the identification and classification of risk and security threats, yet about them and the ways in which they become enrolled in preemptive security we know very little. This study sets out to advance our understanding of these debates and developments.

Writing about security in the wake of the 9/11 attacks is fraught with heightened discussion, pitfalls, and opportunities for misunderstanding. Writing about *private* security is perhaps even more difficult and prone to misunderstanding. The very idea of private security stands into a tension-filled relationship to deeply held convictions about the role and responsibilities of modern governments, the rights of citizens, and democratic principles (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009). In addition, private security challenges deeply rooted disciplinary traditions and theoretical conceptions in International Relations (IR) and political science. As security has become a market-driven and multinational business that cross-cuts territorial boundaries and the public/private divide, traditional notions of the state and security as conceived by IR theory appear to be inaccurate to capture these developments. Firstly, private security appears to disregard traditional theoretical conceptions of the *state*. Secondly, private security directly challenges narrow conceptualizations of *security*, as these are conventionally associated with international strategic studies and the importance of military force and state survival. Private security only emerges as a relevant research agenda in IR and security studies if we widen the concept of security beyond the military sector and the use of force, and if we move beyond a state-centered and zero-sum understanding of security. Private security, as such, is closely related to a broader and emerging "critical" or "new" security research agenda that has called for a "widening" and "deepening" of the concept of security.

Methodologically, this dissertation aims to provide an account of the heterogeneity of everyday security practices and the variety of actors involved in security work. It favors a highly empirical and interpretative approach to security practices, combining ethnographic field research with discourse approaches in the Foucauldian tradition to explore how actors act and how they give meaning to their actions. The emphasis on empirics and field research is not just about adding context

to an existing conceptual framework. More fundamentally, the theoretical argument about practice requires that close attention is paid to the continuous process of assembling objects, subjects and practices as it is *through* these that the worlds that we study are, in fact, constituted. In developing my argument the analysis foreground a particular method of analysis, by Michel Foucault defined as “thinking problematically.” Thinking problematically involves examining the moments when existing phenomena are questioned, classified, and regulated. These are, what I call, examples or moments of “problematization.” Studying these examples allows me to identify practices and technologies when they are unstable and under construction and to fully engage with the activity of politics. This is important as I am particularly concerned with identifying the *discrepancies* between the performative expectations and promises of these new security technologies and markets and the gritty realities of their manifestation. The four cases have, thus, been selected on the basis of their ability to illustrate the (contested) introduction of new concepts, shifting relations and practices, and technological innovations. They involve the study of: “civil” security (Chapter 3); “critical infrastructure” (Chapter 4); urban transport in Europe (Chapter 5); and airport security after the 2006 liquid bomb plot (Chapter 6). All four examples of problematization demonstrate the emergence of: a) new security concepts; b) shifts in security practices and technology; and c) new forms of public/private cooperation.

The dissertation highlights three main arguments, associated with: 1) the marketization of risk and security; 2) private sector enrolment in the protection and management of flows and circulation, and; 3) the emerging Europeanization of security. The first argument is the observation that new homeland security markets are emerging that are rooted in speculative conceptions of risk and market development. Contemporary threat imaginaries that support security market development articulate that Europe has become exposed to global security challenges that are indeterminate and incalculable. According to these imaginaries, the end of the bipolar order has given way to a more fluid threat environment with new types of threats that require early, preemptive intervention. An important contribution of this study has been to point to the *politics* of the

governmentality of preemptive risk and to examine what is at stake in the constitution of these discourses of (in)security. The prevalence of preemptive risk should not be understood as the self-evident response to the events of 9/11, nor as the result of high-level speech acts warranting emergency measures (Copenhagen school securitization). Instead, following the practice-oriented literature in IR and security studies (Paris school securitization), this study has placed emphasis on the role of a diverse group of actors that participate in the formation of preemptive risk.

The emergence of new homeland security markets are also rooted in market logics and longer histories of defense and security capitalization in Europe. Not a strict privatization of security, this analysis has insisted on the importance of the *marketization* of security. The difference lies in the way in which, in the context of marketization, security becomes entwined with logics of global business, trade, and (potential) market development. This empowers commercial firms, but also those public institutions and actors, who are directly embedded in global economic structures, such as finance and trade ministries. In this context, it is imperative to go beyond an account of traditional security institutions (such as the military, police, or ministries of home affairs or justice), and to bring into view newly emerging security actors with relations to the global economy. The EU is a case in point here as it has focused on fostering a profitable and coherent functioning European internal market for homeland security technology, rather than on security per se.

A second argument developed by this dissertation relates to the ways in which homeland security firms are primarily involved in the management of flows and circulations, for example at the airport or in urban transportation. The projects and technological applications that are investigated in the context of this thesis are all tied to the transformation of the practices managing, upholding, and producing connections and circulations. At the core of them is a desire to foster interoperabilities and interconnections between systems and organizations, and, by so doing, to keep critical and large-scale systems and networks at once open and secure. In a world of interconnected systems and networks of flow multiple borders still exist. They are, for example, connected to data mining or screening practices and performed across the ordinary spaces of city subways or rail transportation. With the

enrolment of private techniques and expertise these borders and boundaries are further hardened. This has profound implications for who can claim and expect to get what kind of security. For some time now, the constitution of a transnational and highly mobile elite *vis-à-vis* the subaltern in the context of fast-track and automated border systems has received increased scholarly attention. My contribution has been to focus on the ways in which these forms of expertise spill forth into new spaces such as urban transportation, and to highlight the significant role of the manufacturing industry in promoting particular security imaginaries and technologies.

The third and last argument relates to the study of EU cooperation and integration. The marketization of security implies an increasingly complex and expansive form of EU security governance, with the European Commission as a key driving force, even if it lacks the formal capacities to legislate. The developments that are described by this dissertation invite us to understand EU security as a thriving and pluralistic policy area that cuts across different institutional set-ups (first pillar, second pillar, and remnants of the third pillar), and sectoral boundaries. Cross-pillarization, here, is not so much about the inclusion of strongly political and security-oriented issues into a policy area accustomed to dealing with economic issues. Precisely the opposite appears to be happening: these developments point to an incremental approach to security that incorporates market-driven and technocratic forms of governing. In this regard, EU security integration takes place in a way that reflects the principle of the *fait accompli* – the accomplished fact that makes opposition and argument useless (Majone, 2010). The likelihood for a democratic form of governance is questionable in the light of the opaque and unaccountable partnerships that are forged between the Commission and the security and defense industry. A true competition of ideas would open up the debate and make it impossible to pursue the strategy of *fait accompli*, yet this is prevented by the position of the Commission and the overall structure of EU governance. In spite of the European Commission's monopoly of agenda-setting, the Commission is still very much dependent upon the decision-making power of the Council of Ministers. This means that it is key for the Commission to ally with powerful social groups, such as the security and defense lobby.

This thesis has analyzed the commercialization of European security in the context of changing conceptions of risk. It has focused on the constitution of the European market for homeland security equipment and the growing involvement of homeland security firms in defining and enacting security. While “homeland security” has been almost entirely absent from European political debates, much can be gained from using this term. In particular, homeland security usefully counters the seemingly more neutral concepts of “internal” and “civil” security that circulate in European policy discourse. It has the capacity to raise profound questions about European security, citizenship, community, and political identity that are not captured by these other two terms. Adopting the concept of homeland security has been a critical intervention and has allowed me to re-politicize EU security integration and the effects that are set in motion by the emergence of the European homeland security market.