

# Pluralized Narratives of Security: Descriptive Insights from the Private Industry



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**Abstract** Feeling (un)safe in public spaces depends upon numerous factors which exceed fear of crime and violence. Population growth, urbanization, technological developments, economic and political stability are only a few of the elements that influence our perception of public safety. How safe we feel is a complex question, and the answer depends on multiple factors, including which entity must carry out the task of delivering public safety. One could argue that the state needs to ensure that this goal is fulfilled. However, both state and non-state actors address public safety challenges. The private sector assists public bodies, even substantially, in guaranteeing protection of people. Considering the diverse range of actors involved in conceptualizing security, in this chapter we offer an outlook of how public safety can better be understood in light of the narrative of the private industry. In particular, we delve into the public–private sector interplay for delivering safety solutions through a content analysis of private companies’ web marketing efforts. Here, we posit that the notion of public safety is shaped by narratives from involved and invested actors. Hence, led by the main research question of how the private industry frames the idea of security, we explore content and discourses that exemplify this framing. We find that the private security narrative can be characterized by three main aspects, namely (a) describing a disruptive future, (b) stressing the need for an efficient public sector, and (c) offering to be trusted partners. We argue that for a fair and transparent joint quadruple helix (Schütz et al. *She Ji J Des Econ Innovat* 5(2):128–146, 2019) approach between public sector, private sector, academia, and civil society the role and impact of the private sector narratives on approaches and

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solutions to public safety needs to be well understood and reflected upon by all involved stakeholders.

**Keywords** Plural policing · Security · Public safety · Security industry · Quadruple helix

## 1 Introduction

We build on the concept of security as the configuration of measures put in place to protect society, and on the notion of safety as people's perception of being sheltered from harm. Security can be seen as a function of individual safety (Waldron 2006). Delving deeper into the idea of safety, this entails four conditions, namely, having a climate of social cohesion, respecting individual values, preventing and controlling harm, and holding necessary societal resources (Maurice et al. 2001).

In addressing the role of the private sector in its joint delivery of security and safety with public bodies, there are several pressing factors. First, the industry might enjoy a greater degree of freedom than public bodies in the development of technologies, in how to organize research and development, and in which direction to drive innovation. Yet this freedom in creating security solutions could clash with laws and regulations put in place by the public sector. Too many rules can in fact hinder the collaboration between private and public bodies: from privacy regulations to specific requirements that might entail certificates, or licenses, and therefore costs the industry must cover. For the industry, overregulation can stifle cross-sector cooperation. Furthermore, the undeniable business interests of private companies can push the latter to sustain contact with public bodies to understand their needs, their urgent necessities, as well as to construct them, too. Hence, this co-production of needs generates a dialogue, a communication channel between the two—what we may call a “grey area” of collaboration where interests and goals meet. In addition, the private sector might not be involved in all security issues the same way. This means there could be safety concerns that do not see significant commitment from the industry, such as bias-motivated crime (be it racism, homophobia, transphobia, violence against women, or alike). It may be in fact more possible to find civil society organizations more involved in these areas, perhaps pushing private companies to address the consequences of their low engagement.

On the other hand, the position of the public sector can as well be distinct yet complementary to the perspectives of the private industry. Public bodies such as municipalities, police forces, governments, and other law enforcement agencies might lack technology, services, or specific expertise and therefore may *need* industry tools and services. Public bodies purchase private sector's solutions for safety and security, especially on cyber threats and technological gaps that might need to be filled. Also, public bodies may *miss the goal* when addressing security and safety: there are indeed several obstacles the public sector may encounter when

developing security policies. For instance, a possible hurdle when agreeing on policies could be heavy political commitment—something that may not (at least, not fully) limit private industry decision-making. The same applies if we think of bureaucracy or regulatory frameworks that can slow public sector's work. If we included another actor in the interplay, we could see changes in the synergy between private and public sector. For instance, civil society organizations could redirect public bodies on what the public interest for security truly entails. In doing so, civil society might also make sure the right social groups and the right issues are tackled when intervening for improving security and safety. Civil society organizations can in fact be the key for reaching stakeholders at a local level, where perhaps no public nor private sector is capable. All these perspectives and hypotheses can highlight how much a strong dialogue between these actors is needed to develop proper security policies. The cooperation, the transparency between these players can be paramount for delivering effective safety solutions with high societal impact.

## 2 Literature Review

From the start of the millennium, there have been major shifts in challenges to public safety and security due to technology, globalization, and other societal changes (The Police Foundation 2020). Alongside new challenges we find a shift in core understandings of security and safety. Although often used interchangeably, these two terms embody distinct concepts. On the one hand, security can be understood as the collection of measures taken for protecting subjects from harm, while safety relates more to the resulting feeling of freedom of danger, or lack thereof, and the eventual fulfillment of given societal conditions. Hence, one could position security as the entire process of ensuring individuals' safety (Coursen 2014).

Debates about relations between safety and security suggest that these two concepts are essential for the protection and well-being of individuals. In fact, security and safety share the same goal of maintaining the integrity of a system (Karanikas 2018). Indeed, they are two reciprocally dependable notions since a safety problem can prompt a security concern and vice versa. They are part of the same notion, where safety is the nut, and security its shell (Friedman 2021). Yet as stated above, both terms have undergone significant shifts: for instance, the idea of security changed deeply after the end of the Cold War and its bilateral international structure (Ball 2019). In fact, public safety converted into a political issue most notably by the turn of the millennium (Van Swaaningen 2005).

Understanding which aspects constitute the core idea of security and safety is crucial for understanding dynamics within the quadruple helix (Schütz et al. 2019) of public sector, private sector, academia, and civil society. Security and safety are not only impacted by war, violence, or crime, but also by a variety of societal and personal circumstances. New technologies have also complicated governments' duties, and they now play a role in ensuring society is safe (Etzioni 2002). Day-to-day security can include economic stability, nutrition, dependability of institutions,

political freedom, and many other factors that constitute multi-faceted societies (Ball 2019). All these aspects fuel the notion of public safety. As argued by Maslow in his pyramid of needs, personal safety and self-protection are core priorities for people (Kenrick et al. 2010). However, safety can be broadly unfolded. For Friedman, there is much more than just protection from harm in the definition of public safety. In fact, for exploring the web of components that constitute public safety many factors need to be included. First, a set of human needs for basic subsistence, such as food. Second, Friedman continues, housing is fundamental when defining safety, for without housing people are more vulnerable to threats. Third, the extensions of food and water such as healthy nutrition and clean water. He goes as far as to include health care and access to health providers. Fourth, Friedman mentions “opportunity” as constituting safety. Here, basic education and access to higher education, together with job security, are included as relevant elements that lead someone to feel safe. It is not hard to understand the underlying reasoning: if one cannot study and fails to secure a job that allows for necessities such as food or housing, they risk of falling into poverty and thus unsafety. Lastly, safety can include access to transportation, such as public transit to reach school or to work, and access to other necessities—phones, elevators, and so forth—to which categories of people within society might not have full reach. Disabled people, women, people of color, LGBTQI+ individuals are some of the groups that can experience unequal treatment or discrimination in this regard, resulting in diminishing levels of public safety for them (Friedman 2021). Hence, feeling safe today cannot be solely understood as protection from physical harm. There is much more to consider in the twenty-first century, and security—together with safety—is all-encompassing (Ball 2019).

Security can be defined as the operational arm that ensures law and order (Manunta 1999). Public security is a vital need of a nation, for fostering it has favored social development. Up to the end of the cold war it mainly related to military threats (Flyghed 2019). Yet the contemporary, expanded view of security contemplates harms that go beyond purely military activities, and begins to consider other typologies of threats—such as terrorism, radicalization, cyberattacks, organized crime, structural discrimination, excessive use of police force, and even environmental crimes. This concept extends to the point that the interplay between public sector and private industry seems inevitable. This communalizing alliance or nodal network (Den Boer 2021) facilitates the co-production of security solutions and provides multi-sectoral, coordinated action for the protection of citizens, thus improving public safety.

Technological developments represent a major component in the security equation. Private companies are in fact producers and vendors of security technology, intelligence, and expertise, while also generating different visions on public concerns. Private industry solutions may include software and hardware products that may comprise biometrics, algorithms, wearable weapons and gadgets, drones, cloud services, and personal safety equipment. This technology-driven approach may also seem strategic for solving public security problems: a bias-free, intelligence-led policing that revolutionizes law enforcement. Data can tell us things we have not been able to recognize in the past (Riggs 2019). However, this *solutionist* approach

(Morozov 2014) might not be the answer to security issues. Technology can in fact justify and perpetuate systemic biases, and it would mostly be unable to change the mentality of law enforcement agents in any case (Green 2020). Also, it is relevant to understand whom the improvement brought by technology is for: governments, citizens, police? New technologies bring along many doubts, including ethical ones, for their unintended and unwanted impacts on social and economic life can be substantial (Coeckelbergh 2020).

The interplay and the relation between actors involved in the delivery of security and safety is important. Effectiveness and success of public security policies are clearly influenced by citizen's perception of their legitimacy and of the underlying rationale (Barton and Beynon 2015). Relations surrounding trust and confidence stand out in the literature. In fact, security and safety as concepts are driven by trust. Citizens might feel safer when they believe police is acting in their best interest. Trust in institutions and law enforcement is pivotal for secure and safe societies and this is shaped by multiple factors. Citizens evaluate not just *what* police do, but also *how*, and they gather recent personal experiences from family and friends—often amplified by social media—to develop a judgment on law enforcement's attitude (Gau 2010). The resulting level of trust in police forces is a decisive factor for a society's security. Public trust in the justice system of a country indicates maturity and functioning of the process of criminal justice (Barton and Beynon 2015). Indeed, higher levels of public trust in law enforcement suggest that the justice system is working (Barton and Beynon 2015). Trust is key in the security discourse. When citizens perceive police as procedurally fair and trust their motives, they are more likely to cooperate in investigations, more likely to abide the law, and more likely to respect officers (Jackson and Bradford 2010). In other words, trust enhances security. In the long run, crime-fighting can be more efficient, more cost-effective, and more ethical if the public is treated in a way that is perceived fair (Jackson and Bradford 2010). Also, given that objective measures are only modest predictors of citizens' judgement, one's own encounters with police are the main drivers for people's trust: no additional money, nor workforce might be needed, but only fair treatment (Gau 2010). In addition, higher trust in the role of police and institutions implies public agents will be less distracted with controlling or surveilling citizens, focusing instead on the unlawful few (Barton and Beynon 2015). Higher trust implies higher safety, not only as a flow from citizenry toward police or institutions, but also vice versa. Mutual trust is essential for a fruitful collaboration between police and the public (Kääriäinen and Sirén 2012). Police trust toward citizens might be driven by generalized trust within society, yet the authoritarian position of law enforcement makes it slightly more complex (Kääriäinen and Sirén 2012). Trustworthy exchanges among actors are paramount for a fruitful dialogue and enrich the security equation while furthering effective policies.

Therefore, levels of public safety in urban environments also shape the state's governing capacity and legitimacy. Hinging on trust dynamics, the way states handle safety in urban spaces determines people's views of state-accountability when upholding the social contract (Felbab-Brown 2016). If public safety encompasses all aspects of society and is also an element through which the legitimacy of the

state can be challenged, this shall be a top priority of governments worldwide. For the European Union, citizens need to feel confident that their security and their freedom are duly protected across the Union (EC 2015). The EU has established three main priorities for European security, and these are: terrorism, serious and organized cross-border crime, and cybercrime (EC 2015). It is exactly by addressing causes and risk factors that public authorities can foster public safety and inevitably promote social cohesion and inclusion in collective spaces (EC 2019). States must hold public safety as priority and they often face the challenge of clashing with commercial interests—think, for instance, of dealing with night-time economies that bring considerable revenues while burdening public safety (Crawford and Flint 2009). Ensuring safety means looking at societies from all angles and the delivery of public security and safety is everyone's responsibility (Riggs 2019).

The way private companies portray security plights and the narrative they use while advertising security solutions inform dialogue and trust dynamics for public–private partnerships for security. Consequently, these portrayals of public security and safety matters inevitably influence public perceptions of safety and, eventually, what being safe entails. Hence, analyzing the approach of the private security sector is essential for understanding shifts in the security paradigm.

### 3 An Illustration: Narratives on Private Security Vendor Websites

Given the significant role played by private industry for the delivery of safety and security, its way of addressing public institutions might contribute to how public security and safety are perceived. By conceiving the latter also as the result of this rhetoric, we aimed at identifying, describing, and deconstructing this private industry narrative. For this reason, we conducted a content and discourse analysis of private companies' webpages.

Our sample included 116 websites of security companies that we accessed at the beginning of the year 2021. The target is represented by companies who directly address public sector for the delivery of public security. Hence, choosing those who actively discuss safety issues and present and pitch their products to authorities was deemed the best option. In doing so, we selected companies that are among the partners and exhibitors at three important European security conferences taking place in 2021: the European Police Congress in Berlin,<sup>1</sup> the International Security Expo in London,<sup>2</sup> and the World Border Security Congress in Athens.<sup>3</sup> The lists of exhibitors at these large conferences combined are quite extensive, thus indicating an adequate and diverse representation of private firms.

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<sup>1</sup> More at [www.european-police.eu](http://www.european-police.eu).

<sup>2</sup> More at [www.internationalsecurityexpo.com](http://www.internationalsecurityexpo.com).

<sup>3</sup> More at [www.world-border-congress.com](http://www.world-border-congress.com)

Importantly, as terms can be similar, by “private security companies” we do not intend firms that provide for personal security, bodyguards, or human force. Instead, we mean companies that develop a range of security tools, services, and technologies for the public sector. Hence, our sample included companies active (also) in Europe which produce software or hardware tools for access control and biometrics, CCTV surveillance, communications, perimeter protection, personal protection, security screening and scanning, weapons, wearables, and cybersecurity.

Within these webpages, our selection focused on content of sections redirecting users to “government,” “law enforcement,” “military,” and segments alike. By including all these categories, we were sure not to exclude any content meant to address all layers of the public sector—from police, to soldiers, to public institutions. We considered both textual and visual material, including titles, descriptions, slogans, videos, and images. After conducting open and axial coding (Williams and Moser 2019), this content analysis revealed a shared structured narrative that can impact how public security and safety are regarded today.

The analysis revealed a narrative that is constituted by three strands of rhetoric. These are three key categories that embody crucial messages invoked by the private industry when addressing the public sector. These rhetorical spheres are: the disruptive future demanding innovation, the major improvement in efficiency, and the development of trustworthy relations. Although each of these strands is essential for our study, the trust-driven rhetoric might stand as the most relevant and thus warranting greater consideration, as it encapsulates links and relations between all possible societal actors in the security and safety discourse.

All three categories building the industry’s narrative are considered below.

### ***3.1 A Disruptive Future***

The first rhetoric purported by the private sector entails a vision of the foreseeable future describing the public sector as deficient. The message conveyed is that public authorities and agencies are not ready for what lies ahead. Through this rhetoric, the security market speculates on three aspects: (1) on future threats, (2) on the inability of public bodies to face those threats, and (3) on future economic profit (Hoijtink 2014). What does this future look like, then? First, it is filled with forthcoming dynamic threats. Second, data and technology drive the world, and if public bodies fail to keep up with innovation it will be difficult for them to properly deliver security and thus will fall vis-à-vis those threats. This positions the technology advertised by the private industry as an indispensable tool to face this future. The industry conveys this idea, on the one hand, by highlighting these “future-proof” solutions, contextualized within a threat rhetoric, and on the other by insisting on a compelling necessity for change. Regarding the latter, companies depict public bodies as on the verge of a critical transformation. These notions of imminence, emergency, and requisite innovation feed into the idea of “economy of emergence,” where speculation is the driving force behind innovation and market profit (Cooper

2006). The influence of statements like “forging the future of today,” “technology developed for the needs of tomorrow,” or “cities of the future are on their way” is strengthened by striking visuals. For instance, almost all of the introductory or showcasing videos on these websites hold a fast-paced beat, as for stressing the imminent, rapid, and cascading changes we are witnessing. In doing so, the industry stresses four focal points that inform this narrative: a fast and radical change in what is required to be secure and safe, the necessity to update the public sector and its way of guaranteeing security, an obsolete obstructive technology that needs to be replaced, and the growing concerns in security breaches. In fact, the idea that threats are to be expected at anytime and anywhere is recurrent. Observed literature confirms this notion is frequently associated with the desire to consistently merge security with economic profits of the industry (Hoijsink 2014).

### ***3.2 A More Efficient Public Sector***

Public bodies are reminded that costs of solutions are “less than the cost of a single corrections officer” (Geovox 2021), that “our lives consist of minutes” (Regula Forensics 2017), or that “breaches cost money and time” (Hitachi 2021). The private sector addresses two points: time and money. In their timesaving narrative, not only do companies highlight the benefits of completing more tasks in less time, but also go further to tell law enforcement agents what role society expects them to play. For instance, officers should be out in the streets, and not behind a desk filling out paperwork. Officers should be close to the community and not busy with administrative tasks. The industry explicitly addresses the public sector in asserting where societies want their officers, and how citizens expect them to act. On the other hand, through a money-saving narrative, the industry understands the tight budgets to which public officials bound and stresses how their tools can fulfill the financial needs of the public sector. For instance, relieving burden on staff, reducing complexity of services, and investing in cost-effective tools. The industry claims to know the expectations and needs of public agencies, and it also explicitly addresses how affordable their solutions are, from purchase to deployment and maintenance.

### ***3.3 Ensuring Trustworthy Relations***

Although trust can have a broad interpretation, this analysis identified two leading threads within: trust between industry and public sector, and trust between public sector and citizens. Narratives of trust between industry and citizens was not evidenced during the analysis: most probably because companies are addressing public bodies and a rhetoric of trust between companies and citizenry would exclude their targeted actor. In the former, companies wish to build trust between them and governments by stressing reliability, transparency, and credibility of products they



sell. In addition, the industry emphasizes how it has the exact same goals, aims, and priorities of the public sector. Sharing objectives and opponents is indeed a compelling way of conveying trust: it is indeed easier to trust someone's solutions if that someone shares your purposes. Some companies even bear slogans that closely resemble police's or governments', for instance, "to protect and serve" or "dedication, enforcement, coordination." These kinds of similarities enhance perceptions of trust. Moreover, a verb frequently invoked is "to understand": companies understand that governments have limited budgets, they understand the active role of officers in protecting the homeland, they understand how paramount safety is for the state, they understand consequences of the 2008 credit crunch, and so forth. This empathy delivers trust. However, this is not the only identifiable conveyed trust-channel: private sector seems to aim at being considered a sort of intermediary between public agencies and citizens because it can provide tools to strengthen their trust. So, how does the private sector convey this trust promise? First, by highlighting citizens' expectations: through the tools they offer, the state will have no issue in meeting people's hopes. Citizens expect the state to have appropriate technologies able to protect them in plights where public safety is at risk. For example, a person going to a stadium to watch a football match theoretically expects the state to have prevented possible terrorist attacks, or to have adequate tools that can identify danger. Second, the industry stresses how straightforward the security-trust relation is: increased security means safer citizens who support, trust, and vote for the government. Lastly, the industry shares relevant values in a society that add up to a state's reputation—the latter being a recurrent factor in the narrative. This means that the private sector upholds values at stake for societies that also governments need to uphold and defend, such as protection of privacy or anti-discrimination policies. There is also a perceivable sense of a "switch in roles": these webpages do not just convey the idea that the industry is there to help the public sector in delivering security, but that it works together with it, especially when reading sentences such as "our daily goal is to create more trust, safety and security across every spectrum of everyday society." Companies share missions with law enforcement agencies. They hold the same vision of public bodies, and so they should be the ones safeguarding communities, protecting people, and ensuring safety (all governmental tasks). For instance, they frequently use the plural "We" or "Our" when referring to the carrying out of safety tasks: conveying an overlap in responsibilities that indeed feeds into the idea of plural policing.

## 4 Discussion

While public security has been traditionally considered the prerogative of the state (Hobbes 1651), today the duty of maintaining public security cannot be solely attributed as such. Governing security, in the sense of guaranteeing physical safety of citizens, is surely a responsibility of the state (Bislev 2004). However, ensuring citizens' protection, public order, and national security may be too burdensome a

task to be carried only by governments. Public–private interactions for delivering safety and security are already in place worldwide. Pressure on police departments to keep criminal activity low, better time management of officers, and tight budgets are among the main reasons why partnerships are necessary for public security (Jones 2018). Taking as example the cybersecurity field, partnerships at the EU level are widely present and show a sophisticated collective approach toward cybercrime (ENISA 2017). At the European level, investments for security and safety research projects (e.g., within Horizon 2020) involving all sectors are substantial. Indeed, research on security fostered through those projects is and will remain among the major practices pushing the civil security market (Hoijtink 2014). New issues, new needs, and new societal developments are studied, and new technologies are continuously implemented.

Here, our emphasis is placed upon the functioning of these public–private synergies. The private sector can deliver security mainly in two ways: by offering security personnel, hence providing for people to hire as professional security guards, or by offering privately developed tools and instruments—say, technologies—that can be purchased. Our analysis focused upon the latter.

There are many instances where the private industry joins the public sector for maintaining and fostering safety and security nowadays. Let us look into two examples where this role is evident: (1) illicit trade of tobacco products and (2) the smuggling of illegal goods, mostly drugs. In the first instance, public–private synergies are quite essential. In this case, illicit trade of tobacco products brings social and economic harms (Allen 2012). Tobacco is in fact one of the most trafficked goods in the world (Transcrime 2016). In this regard, estimated national and EU yearly losses in 2010 amounted to ca. 10 Bn € (Allen 2012), and concern about this illegal trade is constantly increasing (Transcrime 2016). The public sector cannot fight illicit trade alone, and necessitates support from the private sector (Lapprand 2021). Agreements with private industry—paramount for countering illicit tobacco trade—are in place already at the EU level between the Commission and tobacco giants. In the second example, public–private alliances are evident against the smuggling of illegal goods, mostly drugs, via parcel transporters. Here, private companies might indeed be victims of illegality, since their services are exploited for crime, but can also serve as an ally for public authorities. In the end, security of businesses is strongly linked to public security (Pierre 2021). Partnerships at EU and local levels to counter drug trafficking are numerous, including relations between the Lithuanian customs department and DHL (Baltic Times 2000).

A broad range of variables can affect the notions of security and safety, including anti-social behavior, as well as discriminatory policies and practices. Anti-social behavior can be categorized as personal when an individual or a community are targeted, as a nuisance when causing trouble and distress to a community, or as environmental when actions affect public spaces (Met Police). Forms of bias feed into race, ethnicity, and class-based discrimination. In this setting, public bodies partner with private companies to stop, prevent, or reduce hurdles to safety. Among others, a reason why public bodies choose to partner with private industry can lie in

the technologies the latter might hold. These tools, for instance, may supposedly be free of bias and allegedly delivering an objective service. As well, private companies might be able to look at public safety and security from a different perspective with respect to public bodies.

Technology is the factor driving and transforming the criminal landscape (Witendorp 2020). The rapid digitalization of societies and economies brings opportunities for criminals to act (Europol 2021). If technology empowers criminals, it needs to be efficiently deployed by law enforcement agencies, too. The private industry stresses this point quite in depth when conveying its narrative of a disruptive future, as we described in our illustrations above. It is thereby suggested that a joint action by private and public actors is paramount for effectively delivering security and safety. In fact, especially in cybersecurity, threats can be too difficult for governments alone to overcome (Mee and Chandrasekhar 2021). The collaborative performance by state and non-state actors—where these public–private synergies are inscribed—is referred to as “plural policing” (Stenning 2009).

Considering the commercial side of these partnerships, these involve investments, products, sales, and strategies, we should conceive the provision of public safety as embedded in a market. Hence, we need to consider demand, supply, and product (i.e., safety). Analyzing the dynamics of the security market is crucial, given its tremendous size. Globally, the public safety and security market is expected to reach \$516.5Bn by 2025 (Markets and Markets 2020). As the European Commission states, EU research funding from 2014 to 2020 allocated around 2 billion € to security research through Horizon2020 projects—around 50% of the entire public financing for the EU civil security research.<sup>4</sup> As of 2020, Europe is the second largest security services market in the world, valued \$36Bn (Statista 2021; Hirschmann 2021). Drawing from these numbers it is evident that the provision of public safety understood as officers arresting criminals or chasing delinquents is an obsolete perception. Stake- and shareholders are not only capable of shaping the idea of what it means to be safe, but they can also redress traditional ways of delivering safety (as policing, or surveillance) by introducing tools capable of impacting citizens’ lives. This broadening of the perception of security and safety might also be suggested by the private sector’s narrative focused on trustworthy relations, which we have explained above. Relations of trust between public bodies, private actors, and citizenry may indeed influence the understanding of public safety and security in a given society.

Considering security and safety as commodities exchanged in a market, we can understand conventional market dynamics therein. The industry has marketing strategies and narratives through which it aims at convincing public bodies. Sellers hold primarily a profit-driven interest, while buyers must unbiasedly operate in the public interest. In this objective account of the security and safety market, crime is

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on how the EU Commission supports achievement of the Security Union via funding security research visit: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/innovation-and-industry-security\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/innovation-and-industry-security_en)

less a moral wrong than a source of profit driving the demand curve (Zedner 2006). Referring to our illustrations above, the private sector narrative targeting budgetary- and time-constraints of public bodies might in fact suggest how important it is to balance necessities and public interest. In fact, being safety a good—marketed, priced, sold, used, and reviewed—there might be a possible clash of interests to consider, too. Private industry’s interests are indeed business related, whereby companies seek to maximize market share and to increase profit (Flyghed 2019). Private interests may not match what the public interest entails, yet these must somehow compromise and merge in an ideal balance to deliver fair and effective solutions. In fact, most private businesses are generally prone to pursue different choices than public agencies’ when countering contemporary safety threats (Bures 2017). The private industry is not accountable to the public, unlike public bodies, but to the clients its services are contracted for (De Waard 1999). Yet, the client in these security and safety contracts *is* the public. Thus, the concept of security and safety stems out *also* from the continuous dialogue between the two sectors and is then influenced by their narratives. This chapter has explored the narrative the private sector conveys when promoting public security issues and solutions.

## 5 Conclusion

The polychromatic concepts of security and safety bring along relevant challenges for today’s societies, starting with the very core idea of what it means to be secure and to feel safe in our public, and private spaces. Despite the myriad of factors defining these concepts, it is essential to regard security and safety also as the result of exchanges and dynamics that involve public sector and private industry.

In our analysis, we delved into the narrative of the private industry. Indeed, the concept of security and safety is shaped and influenced also by how the private sector frames what safety means, and what is needed for securing a society. Public sector and private industry are two actors in a system that can make even better-informed decisions when understanding and recognizing narratives and rhetoric within this system. Therefore, we tried to illuminate these dynamics by addressing the private sector’s security discourse. Indeed, it is herewith encouraged further research onto the eventual impact industry narratives have upon the development of public security policies.

In our analysis, we gathered both textual and visual material. Here, we identified three main strands of rhetoric that probably influence the perception of security and safety of public bodies, resulting in how the latter conceive security policies. First, the private industry conveys an idea of a threatening future for which authorities, and societies, are not ready for, and thus need support of companies. Second, the industry stresses the alleged benefits of their tools in terms of efficiency, focusing on timesaving and budget-compliant solutions. Lastly, there is a strong trust-conveying channel, where the industry shares trust messages that also target the relationship between citizens and authorities.

Hence, we identified a triad of elements—future, efficiency, and trust—that ultimately defines the security narrative of the private industry. It is also critical to understand what drives this narrative, and what thread connects all the elements of this discourse. The leading feature might be “risk”: the industry conveys a risk of an imminent dangerous future where threats evolve every minute, a risk of having law enforcement agencies too slow or with obsolete tools they cannot afford, and a risk of losing citizens’ trust from a political viewpoint. However, another leading aspect is “control”: this is indeed a compelling narrative able to control public–private interactions and dynamics that can determine what it means to be safe and secure in a contemporary society. If able to control how dialogue is shaped, a party can indeed divert the resulting synergies in its favor while tackling issues from a viewpoint that better benefits that same party.

It is also possible to envision some of these players as trust-intercessors who help others thrive. This implies actors might as well work in a grey area in which diverse aims and needs meet. It would be possible to delineate a model of multi-agency in the shaping of security and safety. Although these notions are in fact defined by a plurality of actors, we identified a strong and powerful narrative of the private industry that might influence how security and safety are conceived today. Further research on the impact of narratives here described could shed a light on whether these do or do not influence what societies and public authorities perceive as danger or threat, what is needed for creating safety, and how to lead interactions between sectors.

Looking at the results of our content analysis, we argue that the understandings of security and safety should be co-shaped and critically reflected by all stakeholders. We see a certain risk, based on the big impact the private sector has, that the private sector might dominate the definition and understanding of safety and security. We consider it as crucial for well-functioning quadruple helix dynamics that serve the public interest and protect individual citizens that the understanding of safety and security is truly co-created by all stakeholders. We call for a more substantial and deeper role of academia and academic investigation for safety and security research able to feed into and integrate players’ dialogues. In other words, we strongly encourage a true quadruple effort in defining public security and safety. We envision this as a joint action that ultimately results in the development of better and more democratic safety and security policies.

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