

‘Multi-choice Policing in Africa: Is the Continent Following the South African Pattern?’, *Society in Transition*, 35, 2 (2004), 204-223.

Abstract

The article provides an overview of private and community policing in Africa and compares this with the experience of South Africa. It does so within the paradigm of multi-choice policing, since in any situation there are often a surprising number of policing agencies offering localised protection of different levels of legality, effectiveness, availability, methods and services. The article examines Informal Organised Security Groups; Informal Commercial Security Groups; State Approved Civil Guarding; Dispute Resolution Forums; Religious Police; Ethnic/clan Militias; Political Party Militia Groups; Civil Defence Forces; and Traditional Courts. The overview finds both convergence with and divergence from South African policing as a result of historical, political and economic factors. The article concludes that multi-choice policing is engrained in every community of Africa with the specific form of policing protection chosen being determined by availability, cost and preference for their methods. Two important governance issues confront Africa. First, to establish both the scale of multi-choice policing and the contribution each group can make both to protection from crime, and to restorative and punitive responses to abuses. Second, to devise national strategies of law and order that integrate, regulate, mobilise and empower all those willing to preserve law and order in an acceptable manner.