

From Emergence to Institutionalization of Security Departments within French Companies

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From emergence to institutionalization of security departments within companies. A contingency approach.

Within current knowledge concerning organizations, “security” has no specific sense. It is often considered as part of “safety”. Here we demonstrate that large French companies have institutionalized the distinction in recent years. Under the influence of increasingly strong external contingency factors, they have no other choice but to entrust their protection against hostilities to a specialized department. These “security departments” are now separate from “safety departments” which are now charged with the prevention of and fight against various forms of accidents. In doing so, we are observing the institutionalization of a position which is still seeking its place.

Keywords: *Safety; Security; External contingency*

The months following the attacks of January and November 2015 in France saw a huge reinforcement of security in the country. The forces of law and order were therefore in particular demand. Perhaps too much so for some. In April 2015, CRS squads (riot police) stopped work under the guise of “strikes” for medical reasons. According to police unions, the men were exhausted. In order to cope with this increased workload which finally became permanent, they had a proposal to make which may cause surprise. Except for some technical arrangements, they

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suggested putting pressure on private groups to provide their own security by calling upon private operators. In March 2016, representatives of police unions questioned by the commission of inquiry into the November 2015 attacks confirmed their wish to “entrust certain areas of control to private security”.¹ The responsibility therefore lay with companies to protect them against the terrorist threat. But how were they to do that?

In fact, it is now rare for any kind of organization not to have a department in charge of its safety. Depending on its size, its exposure or the sensitive nature of its business, this responsibility may be given to a team, a single employee or partially or totally outsourced. The tasks which fall to the “safety” team may be clearly defined or ... very vague, as safety often covers very diverse realities. As well as the traditional fight against fire and other forms of accidental danger, these professionals may also be in charge of safeguarding personnel, protecting the organization against theft, attacks, and more generally any sort of malicious action. It is this latter activity which we shall call “security” in this article. Safety and security are closely related ideas, often confused outside the world of practitioners who are in any case not all in agreement on the truth of this distinction and therefore on its usefulness. When we talk about safety and security, what do we mean? Is there a fundamental difference between these two notions? If this difference does indeed exist, what are the organizational and managerial consequences?

French law uses the two notions in an undifferentiated and sometimes confused manner (Delvolve 2011) as, for that matter, do French businesses (Juillet, Hassid, and Pellerin 2012). For if the words have a meaning, organizations do not necessarily take it into account and the use of the two terms, without any real distinction being made between them, is common: there are managers of (or people in charge of) safety, security, and sometimes both. Moreover, in a professional environment largely dominated by the English language, the confusion is aggravated by the fact that the English words “safety” and “security” stand for the exact opposite of the similar-looking French words: French “sûreté” is English “security” and French “sécurité” is English “safety”.

The aim of this article is to show that, under the influence of a specific and evolving environment, organizations have no choice but to entrust to private services responsibility for taking care of their security as we define it above, to the exclusion of any other activity, and in particular of safety. In doing so, we propose to show that a new function is in the course of being institutionalized in major French companies. From a methodological point of view, we will attempt to analyze the emergence of the phenomenon by a chronological review of the literature on the subject. We will then define the institutionalization which is taking place in a quantitative manner,

¹ Le Monde of March 24, 2016—http://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2016/03/24/attentats-les-policiers-veulent-encore-renforcer-leur-armement_4889353_1653578.html

using a field study carried out by questionnaire between May and September 2014 in 73 large French organizations. Our research is focused on the situation in France, but this does not mean that security management abroad is of no interest. The situation in some European countries and in the United States offers some similarities and certain examples will be taken from these countries in support of our argument. However, apart from the fact that field study is easier to access, the French situation seemed to us to be of especial interest. We are in fact here studying a period of emergence. If we touch upon the question of the English-speaking world in the following developments, this is simply for reference purposes, because of the disparity in maturity with the French situation.

The Emergence of Security

The question of security in large companies has been a matter of concern for some time. In France, Fayol states that the protection of people, goods and the company's assets is one of the five major functions of a company (Fayol 1916). Indeed, the first signs of internal departments responsible for safety appeared in the nineteenth century in Europe and in particular in France in certain companies. In 1855, the department store Magasins du Louvre employed 60 inspectors responsible for watching over the staff and customers and this model was copied by all the large stores. At the end of the century, banks and large hotels had equipped themselves with a department responsible for security. Since 1894 the State railway network company had had a brigade of 52 armed guards to combat the theft of railway infrastructure (Berlière and Levy 2013). However, outside of a few particular business sectors (banks, hotels, railways), recognition of internal departments for security only became reality much later, at least in Europe and in France in particular. There was no sign of internal security departments in the organigrams of French companies in the middle of the twentieth century. "Organizing one's own safety" remained the overriding principle of the discipline in industrial organizations. Moreover, these services had rather a bad press since they were seen as favored assistants of the employer, loudly criticized by the unions and communist militants (Kalifa 2000, 250).

In the United States, the situation was rather different at the beginning, and even more so by the middle, of the twentieth century. Henry Ford is thus credited with the first instance of "corporate" security management (Gill and Hart 1996; Lippert, Walby, and Steckle 2013). This was despite their image being no better than in Europe since, for example, *Ford Service Department* was largely comprised of individuals with reputations for violence, who were meant to instill fear in the workforce to thwart any attempt to disturb the manufacturing process in the hope of receiving salary increases; nevertheless, the number of companies with departments responsible for security was far from insignificant. In this capacity, internal departments responsible for security and security providers were able to form an association, ASIS, in 1953

(the number of members was 257 at the end of 1955 and over 2000 by the end of the 1950s²). Be this as it may, although some large American companies had such a service in their organigram, this function was at the bottom of company hierarchy in the middle of the twentieth century. For example, General Electric had appointed a “chief warden” on grade N-6 (Chandler 1988). So, up to the middle of the last century, and even in the United States, the role mainly involved aspects of surveillance and was not yet recognized and considered legitimate by the various stakeholders of the company.

It was only from the 1960s and 1970s that this function really took off in the United States. Indeed, large American companies considered it to be a major condition of their international development. It was during this period that American companies were expanding abroad at fast rate. So, convinced that security was at the core of commercial warfare, IBM set up security management tools from the 1970s, requesting methodological support from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The primary focus was on protecting the company against dangers posed by extremists, as it considered itself exposed to the risk of hostage-taking and ransom demands. This resulted in training for all employees of its subsidiaries, provided by the department of security: *Security. A management Style. A course of instruction in corporate protective service*. IBM as a Target for Terrorists (Mattelart 2007, 153). IBM’s proactive stance against the terrorist threat was not an isolated example. It was widely shared by the largest multinationals throughout the world which, at the time, were almost exclusively American.

In France, as in many European countries, especially the Mediterranean countries, it was quite different, except for a few rare groups in the coal, oil and gas sector, which very soon provided themselves with such management. To this effect, as Philippe Madelin describes, the French State group Elf-Erap had an internal protection service which maintained strong links with intelligence services from the years between 1960 and 1970 (Madelin 2007, 97). The integration of internal security services into European companies must be linked to their international development, especially in unstable regions, to the proliferation of threats, even if some are at times exaggerated because of the media attention they attract, to the weight of law on these matters which has considerably increased during the 2000s and to the consequent increase in the responsibility falling to companies.³

Development of security at the heart of business was empirical and its development continues to be so (Juillet, Hassid, and Pellerin 2012). Hostage-taking on planes belonging to Air France between the mid-1980s and 1990, development of

² M.A. Davidson, *The Gold Standard, Asis Celebrates 50 Years of Advancing Security* (Asis International, 2004).

³ For further information on this subject, see O. Hassid, and A. Masraff, *La sécurité en entreprise* (Paris: Maxima, 2010), J.-P. Vuillerme, “Positionnement et périmètres des directions sûreté,” *Sécurité & Stratégie* (October 2013), 5–20. and L. Griot, “Portrait des directions de sécurité et de sûreté,” *Sécurité & Stratégie* October 2013, December 2013 (14): 26–33.

large groups like BASF, Shell and Total in unstable regions (Libya, Niger, Nigeria, Yemen, etc.) or terrorist attacks against one of the main international business centers, the World Trade Center in 2001, have led these large groups to structure internal security services to protect their assets, their personnel, their information, and therefore their image. It is only in the last two decades that more and more companies have decided to create such department in their organigrams. That is why we believe we can demonstrate statistically that “we are living through [...] a time of historic upheaval in which the empirical security of the company becomes an end in itself [...]” (Ocqueteau 2011). And if businesses have no choice but to take this evolution into consideration, and to create the function by differentiation, it is because their security and criminological environments have greatly developed over 20 or so years.

External Factors in Evolution

French labor law seems to us to be the first of these factors. Since 2002, it has undergone several major evolutions which have made the employer’s obligations considerably heavier. Article L. 4121-1 of the labor code in fact lays down that “The employer takes all necessary measures to ensure the safety and protect the physical and mental health of the workforce”. But after the attack which claimed the lives of 11 members of a naval construction management team in Karachi on May 8, 2002, the law gave this obligation further weight. In its decree of January 15, 2004, the court for Social Welfare Matters in Saint Lô decided that “in light of the employment contract linking the employer to his employee, the employer is held to therefore have an obligation in respect of security”. A more recent decision reinforced this obligation: on December 7, 2011 the Supreme Court decided that, in the case of an expatriate worker, this obligation fell upon the employer even if the criminal acts took place outside of working hours (Cass. Soc. December 7, 2011, no. 2575). This legal evolution can be traced back to an international environment for companies that were steadily deteriorating, both from the point of view of criminality and from that of international security.

It is difficult to establish statistically how far the security environments of large companies have deteriorated, figures being rare because companies prefer to maintain discretion on these matters. However, it seems to us possible to describe it in a statistical manner. Following the example of Aline Lebœuf (2011), we can compare the situation of expatriate workers of large companies with that of workers in non-governmental organizations. Now, from this point of view, incontrovertible figures are available. Between 2003 and 2013 the number of incidents affecting NGO personnel increased more than fourfold. Although the number of victims who lost their lives in these incidents only doubled, the number of kidnappings affecting NGOs rose from 7 to 141 within 10 years. Generally speaking, criminality has always targeted businesses

but the phenomenon of globalization has accentuated this trend and the globalization of criminal activities is now commonly seen as a parallel development (Rauffer 2010).⁴ From this perspective, threats specifically affecting companies are beginning to be studied by management sciences. Véry and Monnet (2008) convincingly classify these threats in seven categories and determine the nature of the impact they have on company business. Dalmas, Nivet, and Spach (2014) also observe an intensifying of these threats by focusing on the question of geopolitical risk which only partially intersects with the issue of threats of a criminal nature. They also analyze the impact on the company of various causes of political instability, both national and international and the violence resulting from them. Terrorism features prominently in their analysis.

Because beyond organized criminality of a financially-motivated type, it is naturally terrorism which is identified as one of the major sources of threats affecting organizations, which have not escaped the severe worsening of the threat over the past 15 years: according to the Global Terrorism Index 2015, terrorism killed nine times more people in 2014 than it did in 2000.⁵

Indeed the literature on the management of terrorism by companies and private operators has seen resurgence since the attacks of September 11, 2001. What is often evoked is the cost of terrorism to organizations (Dorn and Levi 2006; Niskanen 2006) as well as the influence of terrorism on the international business of companies (Jain and Grosse 2009). This last point is no doubt the most productive in the field of research in management sciences. In 2010, Czinkota et al. drew up a thorough research agenda by comparing in the same article the direct costs of terrorism (destruction and loss of life) and the indirect costs which are considerably more significant in the long term: loss of confidence of customers, costs of necessary security measures, or costs of strengthened security caused by the political and legislative reaction to a wave of terrorism. The issue of the influence of terrorism on companies and their markets is also the subject of numerous sectoral approaches. The area of logistics was studied after the attacks of September 2001 (McIntyre and Travis 2006; Sheffi 2001) in perspective of risks related to the interruption of the supply chain. Tourism, notably international tourism, has also been the subject of numerous studies. The economic consequences were highlighted first (Goodrich 2002). They seemed to be greater when the country targeted was a developed, western nation (Liorca-Vivero 2008) and even more severe if the country affected was in addition suffering great political instability (Shrabani and Ghialy 2014). Finally, the consequences for the air transport market were evaluated and relativized, at least from the point of view of the stock market value of airline companies (Gittel et al. 2008).

⁴ <https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents/report/summary>

⁵ http://static.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/2015%20Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report_2.pdf

From a quantitative viewpoint, the question of the influence of terrorism on matters of security produces an interesting statistical analysis. This is possible thanks to the Global Terrorism Database of the University of Maryland.⁶ This tool registers all terrorist acts committed from 1970 to today. It enables us to research them and classify them according to various criteria which may be cross-referenced. One of these criteria is of particular interest to us, that of the type of targets chosen. Some rapid research shows us that between 2000 and 2014 (latest available year), France was the victim of 331 terrorist-type attacks and that 87 of these were aimed at economic activity. Thus, slightly over one quarter of terrorist targets in France are persons or goods targeted as actors in a business activity. Moreover, in the same period, 99 targets belong in a broad sense to public powers (State, police, justice, etc.) The 145 other targets have to do with private interests. This last point is important as one of the determining factors in the institutionalization of security management lies, in our view, in the fact that public safety must now be seen as real public/private cooperation.

For if there is any prerogative perceived as traditionally sovereign, it is that which ensures the public security at the heart of a nation. The situation of western countries, and of France in particular, must however incline us to recognize that this security result very largely of a public/private partnership which has long been promoted by the French State. For Xavier Latour (2010), the origins of this evolution are to be found in the middle of the nineteenth century with the creation of a police force specifically for the railways. But it was with the law of July 12, 1983 that the French State acknowledged the importance of private security in France and attempted to regulate the sector. The place of internal security departments (which we shall here call security management) features very little in these texts, which no doubt contributes to the relative lack of knowledge about the function. From this point of view, the recent observation concerning Great Britain (White 2014) seems to us equally applicable to France: the relative invisibility of security management to the general public is largely because this activity is hardly regulated at all. The fact remains that this great movement of skill transfers has been a powerful factor in the institutionalization of security management. The status of Organizations of Vital Importance (OIV) is the best illustration of this. French legislation on OIV status dates from a ruling of 1958 which was heavily influenced by the necessities of the Cold War. Road networks in particular were involved. But the law evolved considerably from the beginning of the years 2000 to take into account the criminal and terrorist threats (Galland 2010). Organizations whose activity was considered vital to maintaining economic activity in France were required to do whatever was necessary to ensure that their activity would not stop in any circumstances or would be maintained to a sufficient extent.⁷ This obligation, moreover, has for several years gone beyond mere

⁶ <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

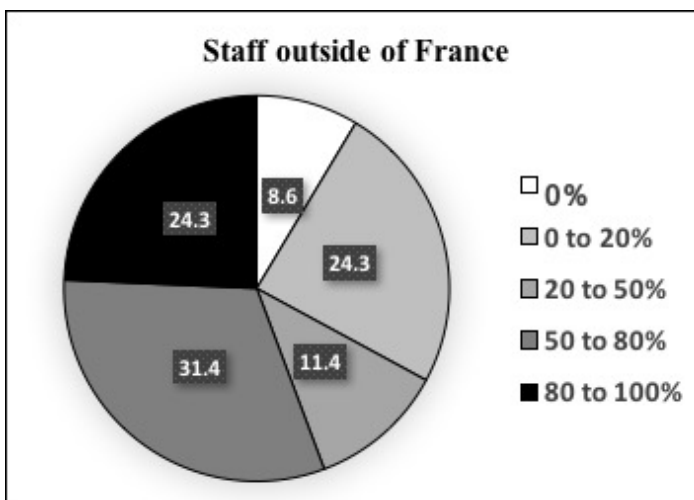
⁷ Prime Minister, General Secretariat for Defense and National Security, Inter-ministerial general instruction relating to the security of activities of vital importance, no.6600/SGDSN/PSE/PSN of January 7, 2014.

matters of security. The evolution of the legislation since 2013 requires OIVs to also be capable of withstanding a natural disaster such as the once-a-century flooding of the Seine, for example.

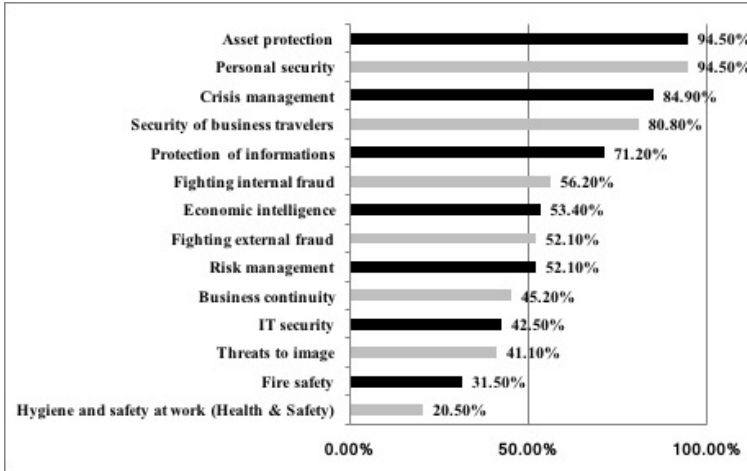
Although security itself has been little studied, the situation of the person, the director of security, has received a bit more attention and existing works confirm the importance of the director of security in current arrangements for public security. Lund Petersen (2013) therefore sees in him a sort of hybrid manager, whose role is halfway between the private interests of his employer and those of the State with responsibility for ensuring public security. He is then in the front line of protecting the economic assets of the nation and is thus a partial extension of public power. This vision is confirmed by Ocqueteau (2011) who sees in this ability to work for two worlds apparently distant from each other one of the most important skills of security managers of large companies. The conclusion of these different contributions is that the role of director of security/safety remains vague and still poorly known. The professional identity of the holders of these posts also suffers from this lack of clarity.

Institutionalization in Action

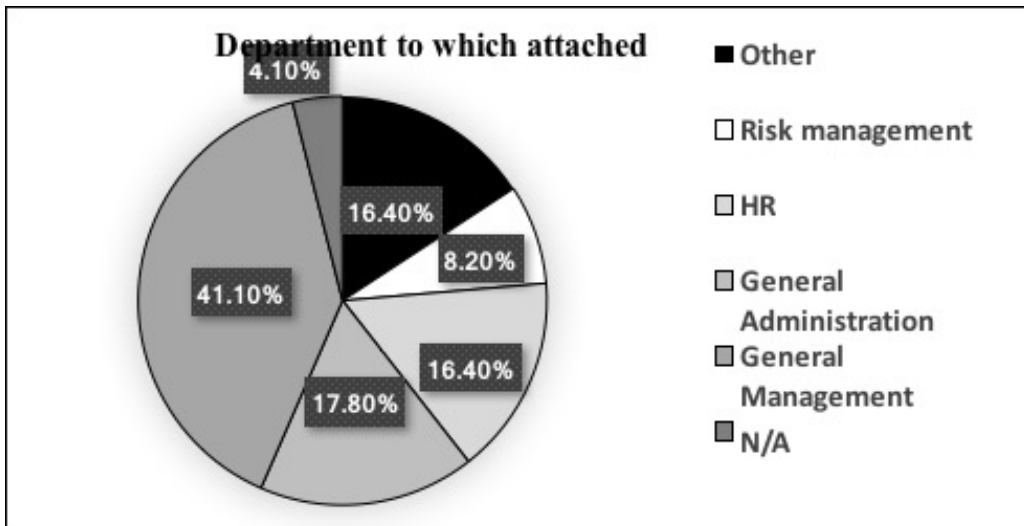
Faced with the evolution of their security and legal environments, have companies finally subjected their organizations to making that movement toward differentiation which will lead them to make security a completely separate function, a role undertaken to the exclusion of any other activity? The survey on which we are here basing our findings was carried out between May and September 2015. A questionnaire was sent to 150 security managers or people responsible for security in large French companies. Thanks to a return rate of almost 50%, we are able to present the results from 73 respondents. The sample questioned here remains very representative of large French companies: their staffing is substantial as only 11 of the 73 respondent companies have a workforce of less than 5,000. On the other hand, 85% of them ($N=62$) have more than 10,000 employees and 42.5% ($N=31$) have over 50,000. According to INSEE, only some 50 French companies have over 20,000



employees. So, although the groups of employees chosen for our questionnaire do not reflect exactly those chosen by INSEE, we can claim that our sample is very broadly representative of large French companies. These companies are, moreover, very heavily internationalized. To the question “What proportion of the total staff of your company are located outside of France?”, we obtained the result presented in the diagram below. So, 55.7% ($N=39$) of the companies questioned have over half their staff located outside of France whereas those with no presence outside of the country



are only a very small proportion of the sample. This observation seems central to us as our argument is that one of the prime causes of the evolution we are describing lies in just this deterioration in the operating conditions of the international business of these companies.



Essentially, this research has enabled us to establish that all these organizations have security or safety management. We then questioned those responsible for these services about their areas of responsibility. The response chart was drawn up from an in-depth review of the professional literature on the subject. To the question “Does your role cover...?” 14 possible answers were offered. The positive responses are presented as follows:

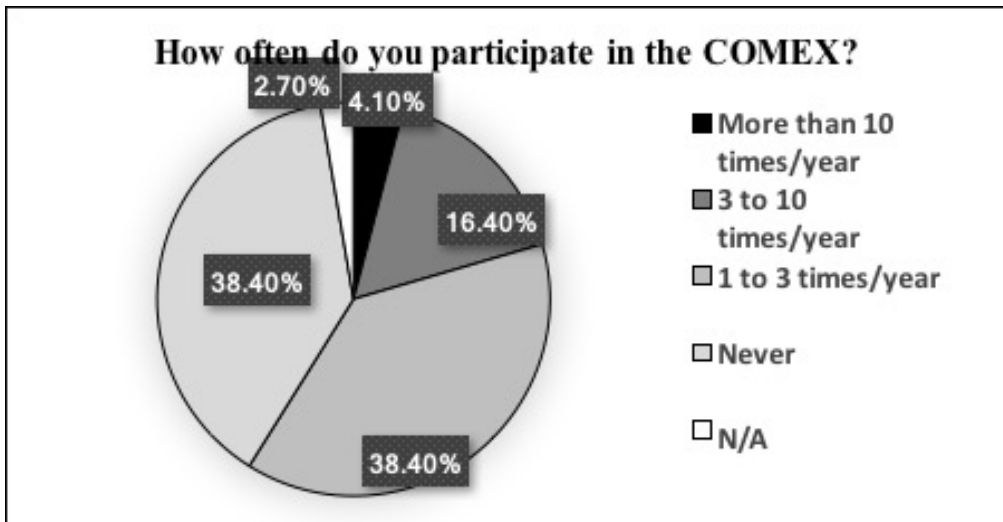
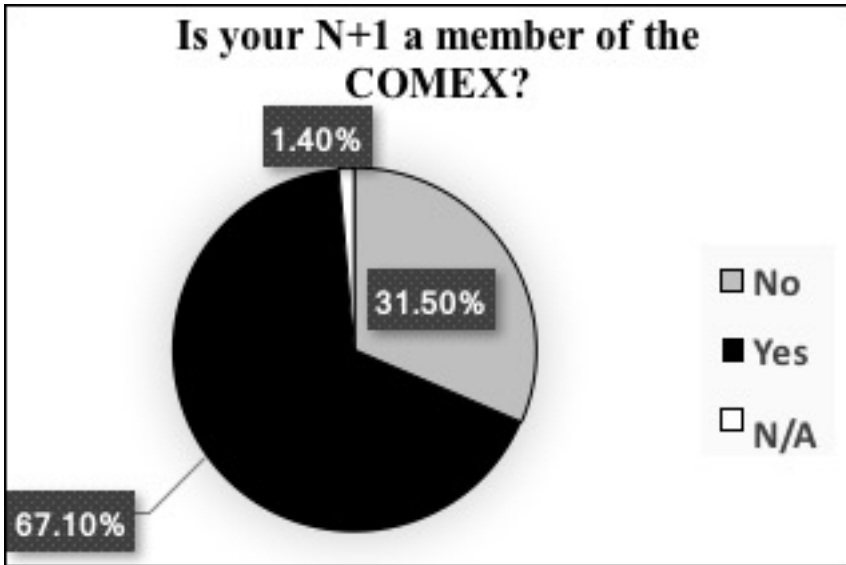
So, although there is a centering of responsibilities around asset protection, personal security and crisis management, we have attempted to measure the level of crossover of the safety and security functions by posing the question of Hygiene and Safety at Work (Health and Safety) and fire safety. 31.5% of respondents ($N=23$) say they are responsible for fire safety and 20.5% ($N=15$) say they are responsible for Health and Safety. These two responsibilities overlap considerably since almost all the respondents responsible for Health and Safety (13 out of 15) are also responsible for fire safety. This is an important point, both in defining the range of skills in security management and in determining the characteristics of the professional identity of those involved. Although the security function as defined at the beginning of this article is the one which protects organizations against all malicious acts apart from attacks with accidental origins, we must accept that security management is undertaken in an exclusive manner in almost 70% of cases.

Beyond skills and responsibilities, we were interested in the real place of these managers as we tried to establish their positioning in the organization and their effective links with the managing bodies of their companies. Our first observation was that security management is normally located at the heart of general management and the general administration of companies. To the question on which department they were attached to, the professionals concerned gave the following responses.

The fact remains that, even if it is an important point, hierarchical positioning is not a determining factor in the real influence of such a service within an organization. To pursue this idea further, we tried to measure the ability of security managers to get them heard by the Executive Committee (COMEX) of their companies.

To the question “Are you members of the COMEX?”, 6 respondents out of 73 replied “yes”, that is, 8.6% of the total. This proportion remains low, especially if we compare it to the situation in the United States where the situation of security management is much more mature. An ASIS study indeed shows that the person with ultimate responsibility for matters of security has the status of vice president (or executive vice president) in 27.5% of cases and in 23.1% of cases the status of Chief Security Officer (CSO) which, according to the definition provided implies that the post-holder is a “member of the board”.⁸ We can therefore say that in over 50% of cases, those responsible for security in large American groups are members of the COMEX.

⁸ ASIS International “CSO Roundtable: Survey Security Department Organizational Structure” August 2012.



To go further, two other questions enable us to tackle the problem of access to the COMEX: “Is your *N+1* a member of the COMEX?” and “How many times do you participate in the COMEX each year?” The results are shown in the following diagrams.

These responses call for several observations. If we cross-reference the answers to both these questions, we see that 12 people reply “no” to both of them. In other words, 16.6% of the people questioned have no access, direct or indirect, to their COMEX. The number of times people participate in the COMEX annually is zero in 38.4% ($N=28$) of cases and low (one to three times per year) for the same proportion. This being the case, it is difficult to say that security is perceived as a

strategic activity by the majority of organizations questioned. We explain this by the fact that the movement to institutionalize security management in France is in fact still developing.

Conclusion

We intend to continue this research to determine more precisely the outlines of a profession which is still emerging. Yet in order to continue down this road we needed to begin by demonstrating the fact that this new profession does indeed exist within organizations in France. We believe we have shown that security is now seen as a real function in the service of the organization. It is less and less conflated with safety, and more and more institutionalized for its own sake. The professional literature sheds a clear light on the difficulty security management has in finding its place within the organization. Although necessary and increasingly allocated a place, it is not yet really part of the functions recognized as central in companies. Some of the results of our study relating to the hierarchical positioning of security management show that it is the strictly hierarchical positioning of security management that often underpins the institutionalization of the function. This entry route into the organization obliges us to examine the perceived legitimacy of this profession within companies. Being imposed from above, will security management not have difficulty being accepted as a full constituent part of the organization? If we add to this the hybrid nature of the function, situated halfway between the economic interests of companies and the preservation of the economic interests of the nation, we are justified in thinking that there will have to be a lengthy process of integration before the function ceases to be seen as in any way an alien body in the organization.

Beyond the concrete reality of security management in the large companies, we must now examine the place of private organizations in the provision of public security. Political sciences and above all Law have already considered this question very regularly. Besides its regulatory aspects, this contribution from companies to the joint provision of public security must however be managed and it will no doubt be of interest for management sciences to get to grips with the subject.

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