

American Academy of Political and Social Science

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Police, Public Order, and the State: Policing in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, the USA, Israel, South Africa, and China* by John D. Brewer, Adrian Guelke, Ian Hume, Edward Moxon-Browne and Rick Wilford

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SOCIOLOGY

BREWER, JOHN D., ADRIAN GUELKE, IAN HUME, EDWARD MOXON-BROWNE, and RICK WILFORD. *The Police, Public Order, and the State: Policing in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, the USA, Israel, South Africa, and China.* Pp. x, 245. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. \$49.95

There have been many studies of how police seek to maintain internal order, but there has, unfortunately, been little systematic comparative work. Seeking to remedy this, the five authors of this volume offer information on seven very different countries: Great Britain, Northern Ireland,

the Irish Republic, the United States, Israel, South Africa, and China.

The book is clearly and intelligently written. It is jargon free and accessible to the reading public. The methodology is not made explicit, but it appears to be based primarily on documents and secondary literature. In between an all too short, nontheoretical introduction and a more analytic conclusion, Brewer and his coauthors devote a chapter to a case study of each country. The chapters use the same subheads: background; structure, organization, and finance; formal structure of authority; policy-military relations; public-order situations; public perceptions of police; and the police as a political

institution. The quality and amount of information offered varies considerably by country, with the least information available for China.

Policing is shown to be a political activity regardless of the context. While the book finds considerable variation within as well as between countries, it also notes that regardless of the country there are certain broad legislative and organizational parallels. Even the most authoritarian states impose some formal limits on police conduct, and the most liberal grant some discretion and sometimes see police acting outside the law.

The variation documented is interesting, though most of it is not surprising: thus systems may be centralized or decentralized, emphasize prevention or repression, offer more or less discretion, be tightly or loosely controlled by law and policy; police may create disorder as well as order; and the armed forces may be given significant or minimal responsibility for maintaining order, or they may be a militarization of police.

The final chapter identifies three strategies for maintaining order: criminalization, accommodation, and suppression. These strategies co-exist in the most diverse systems. The chapter argues that there is some convergence between authoritarian and liberal states, with the former becoming more authoritarian and the latter more legalistic in responding to threats to public order.

The last chapter makes a good beginning but could go much further in trying to account for the causes and

consequences of other types of variation. The book would be stronger if its theoretical framework had been more closely linked to the collection and presentation of the basic data.

I would also like to have seen more information on the nature of the perceived – and actual – threats to public order; more systematic consideration of thresholds and definitions of public order; attention to the varieties of inter-dependence that exist among those who challenge public order and those who seek to control it; and some consideration given to the varied but increasingly important role of private police in Western Europe and the United States and the move toward the internationalization of policing.

The book contains useful descriptive information and some good ideas for future research. As such, it should be a standard library reference. It is to be hoped that libraries will not be deterred by what seems to be an outrageous price for such a small book. Specialists seeking fuller explanation and the assessment of hypotheses will find their appetite whetted but hardly satisfied.

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