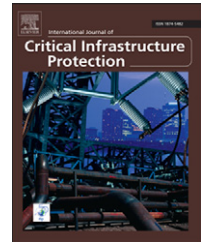


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Realizing the promise of public-private partnerships in U.S. critical infrastructure protection



Austen D. Givens*, Nathan E. Busch

Department of Economic Crime and Justice Studies, Utica College, 1600 Burrstone Road, Utica, New York 13502, USA

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ABSTRACT

To date, much attention has focused on the advantages of public-private partnerships for critical infrastructure protection in the United States. These include reducing the duplication of effort, enhancing cross-sector communication, increasing efficiency, and ultimately achieving the protection objectives better than government or business acting independently. The benefits suggest that public-private partnerships will be a significant and enduring part of critical infrastructure protection initiatives in the United States. However, we argue that a pattern is emerging that may lead to a fracture between the appearance and the reality of public-private partnerships in U.S. critical infrastructure protection. Although some research has focused on specific challenges in this domain of U.S. homeland security, comparatively little attention has been paid to thinking through the issues facing critical infrastructure protection as a whole. We maintain that unless concrete steps are taken to bolster public-private partnerships in critical infrastructure protection, they will be much less effective than hoped for by U.S. homeland security analysts.

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1. Introduction

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, great progress has been made in fostering public-private sector partnerships for U.S. critical infrastructure protection. These public-private partnerships—which we define as collaboration between a public sector (government) entity and a private sector (for-profit) entity to achieve a specific goal or set of objectives—have increasingly been incorporated into critical infrastructure protection initiatives at all levels of government, from the local through the federal (see, e.g., [1–7]). At the local level, grassroots organizations such as ChicagoFIRST (Financial Industry Resilience and Security through Teamwork) have been formed to enhance public-private emergency preparedness, evacuation planning, and credentialing in the Chicago-area financial sector [8]. The All Hazards Consortium, a non-governmental organization, has

hosted numerous workshops and meetings on critical infrastructure protection to bring together government agencies and businesses at the state level [9]. Within the U.S. federal executive branch, new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) advisory groups such as the Critical Infrastructure Partnership Advisory Council (CIPAC) are made up of public sector and business representatives who meet regularly to exchange information of mutual interest [10].

Overarching these local, state, and federal-level initiatives, the White House embraces the private sector as an essential part of the United States National Security Strategy [11]. The National Security Strategy conceptually shapes how government and non-governmental organizations should work together to achieve security objectives; its scope transcends the local, state, and federal levels of government. And in two key areas of critical infrastructure—the operation of commercial facilities and energy production—recent disasters demonstrate the prominence of

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 315 557 6615; fax: +1 315 223 2456.
E-mail address: adgivens@utica.edu (A.D. Givens).

public-private partnerships. The responses to Hurricane Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, for instance, required thousands of public and private sector employees to cooperate and coordinate their actions [12,13]. Thus, from the local level to the federal level, public-private partnerships are now an indispensable part of critical infrastructure protection.

Despite this progress, public-private partnerships related to U.S. critical infrastructure protection are now at an important crossroads. To date, much attention has focused on the advantages of public-private partnerships in critical infrastructure protection. These include reducing duplication of effort, enhancing public-private sector communication, increasing efficiency, and ultimately achieving objectives better than government or businesses acting independently [14–18]. The benefits suggest that public-private partnerships will be a significant and enduring part of critical infrastructure protection initiatives. However, we argue that a pattern is emerging that may lead to a fracture between the appearance and reality of public-private partnerships related to critical infrastructure protection. Although some research [19–21] has focused on specific challenges, comparatively little attention has been paid to thinking through the issues facing critical infrastructure protection as a whole. We maintain that, unless concrete steps are taken to bolster public-private partnerships in critical infrastructure protection, they will be much less effective than hoped for by homeland security analysts.

This article begins by briefly summarizing the evolution of critical infrastructure protection in the U.S. national security context since 1997—an evolution that we argue has come to emphasize public-private partnerships directly and prominently. The article proceeds to analyze four challenges to public-private partnerships in critical infrastructure protection—public-private sector coordination, information sharing, promoting private sector engagement, and cybersecurity—and argues that there is the potential for a gap between their apparent and actual success. The article also offers some recommendations and discusses the need for further research in the area.

2. Evolution of critical infrastructure protection

In 1997, U.S. government and private sector leaders took the first steps in changing the nation's approach to critical infrastructure protection. Prior to that time, the importance of critical infrastructure protection was recognized, but only for its commercial impact rather than national security implications. The Clinton administration first saw the need to re-examine the critical infrastructure in other contexts [22]. This led to the formation of the President's Commission on Critical Infrastructure Protection (PCCIP). By today's standards, the PCCIP's final report appears remarkably understated:

[W]e have to think differently about infrastructure protection today and for the future....We found that the nation is so dependent on our infrastructures that we must view them through a national security lens....We also found the

collective dependence on the information and communications infrastructure drives us to seek new understanding about the Information Age. Essentially, we recognize a very real and growing cyber dimension associated with infrastructure assurance [22].

The PCCIP membership also foreshadowed the proliferation of public-private partnerships in critical infrastructure protection; representatives from AT&T, IBM, the Association of American Railroads, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company all sat on the Commission alongside government representatives. Of course, in the fifteen years since the Commission's report, much has changed—in large part prompted by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

2.1. Aftermath of 9/11

The devastating attacks of September 11, 2001 reinforced the PCCIP's findings on the importance of the critical infrastructure to national security, profoundly underscoring the value of the PCCIP being composed of public and private sector officials. As Abou-Bakr [23] notes, 9/11 represented a catastrophic breach of national security that involved the use of private resources (commercial aircraft) in one critical infrastructure sector (transportation sector) to attack multiple public and private sector resources, including The World Trade Center, part of the commercial facilities and banking/finance sectors; Pentagon, part of the government facilities and defense industrial base sectors; and associated critical infrastructure components in lower Manhattan, including electricity and steam distribution systems, telecommunications equipment, and components of the New York City subway system. Thus, 9/11 highlighted the importance of critical infrastructure protection to confront threats to the public and private sectors, and it sparked a series of historic changes in government.

A new idea—U.S. homeland security—began to rapidly alter the organization of government and the national approach to critical infrastructure protection. Less than a month after 9/11 attacks, the White House created the Office of Homeland Security headed by former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge [24]. In 2002, DHS was established [25]. This new cabinet-level department brought 22 disparate agencies together under one administrative umbrella. It represented an extraordinary realignment of public sector resources to confront natural and man-made threats to the United States. Among its new responsibilities, DHS became the lead federal agency for coordinating critical infrastructure protection activities [26]. However, as time passed, it became increasingly clear that the idea of “protection” itself needed to evolve. This gave rise to two important changes that continue to impact public-private partnerships in critical infrastructure protection today.

First, the idea of “protection” was transformed into an ethos of “resilience.” This broad concept suggests a more integrated role for the private sector in protecting the critical infrastructure. Second, public-private sector collaboration became the “new normal” for this activity. There is recognition that joint action by government and business is needed to achieve resilience. For the public and private

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