

**‘Protection from Crime: What is on Offer for Africans?’,  
*Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 22, 2 (2004), 165-  
188.**

Together, the perceptions of failing state police and rising crime have created a situation today where a plethora of non-state policing groups have emerged across the continent. Their variety is bewildering. Some adhere to the law and have police support, some are lawless and violent in their assault on crime; some are spontaneous, short lived or evolving, some are more permanent commercial enterprises. They are authorised by an array of groups besides governments. These include economic interests (legal and illegal), residential communities, cultural communities, and individuals. Similarly, there is considerable variety amongst those who provide policing. Commercial companies, non-state authorisers of policing, individuals, as well as governments are involved. It is this variety and complexity that the paper explores. It begins with an examination of the paradigms that have been proposed to capture this fragmentation of policing, before introducing a typology of the various categories of policing groups that have arisen and their key features. The paper concludes with an assessment of the dangers of proliferating non-state policing.