

Entrepreneurial Policing? International Policing Challenges

GRAHAM ELLISON & GEORGINA SINCLAIR

Subjects:

- UK Policing
- International Policing Assistance
- Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (UK)
- Private Security Sector

International police assistance is a global growth industry. Democratic police reform has become a cornerstone of security sector reform within peacebuilding and capacity building programmes. The UK provides police for a wide range of missions across the world. There are challenges in the provision of quality policing services resulting from the fragmented nature of UK police service provision and growing tension between state and corporate providers.

History of International Policing

The UK Police have a long history of providing overseas policing and have acquired a 'worldwide reputation for excellence and expertise in delivering effective policing. Their skills and experience enable the UK Government to provide international policing assistance to help promote [stability](#) and support peace operations overseas.' More so than any other European nation, the UK has exported its policing styles internationally. From the early part of the nineteenth century 'British' policing travelled from the metropole throughout the empire and commonwealth employing two broad based models: a so-called civil/Metropolitan style, and a colonial/Irish style. In practice though a cross fertilisation occurred between these policing models which contributed not only to these earlier international experiences but also to the emergence of modern and professional policing. Following the Second World War, the international *modus operandi* of the UK police changed with the advent of multi-lateral policing approaches firstly with the Allied Control Commission in Germany and Italy, and, later with with early United Nations led missions (for example the 'Operation des Nations Unies au Congo' (ONUC, 1960-1964). With an emerging Cold War backdrop the need to tap into the different strands of UK policing: the civil and the colonial styles - became apparent. Requests to the UK government included, for example, the provision of quasi-military Northern Irish policing expertise (from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)) during the Greek civil war (1946-49), to offering Metropolitan Police expertise (civil) to Columbia in the 1950s, and, to the dispatch of former colonial police Special Branch officers to South Vietnam during the 1960s to assist the United States.¹

¹ See Sinclair, G. (2006) *At the end of the line: Colonial policing and the imperial endgame*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

'New' International Policing Challenges

The post Cold War period (post 1989) ushered in a 'new' period of UN interventions supported by a growing international community which included the UK. British policing became a valuable commodity to be traded on the international market. The 'gold rush' of international policing missions saw comparatively large cohorts of UK police deployed to the Balkans from the mid 1990s for around a decade. The United Nations peacekeeping mission to [Kosovo](#) (1999) necessitated the provision of executive authority policing (carrying out full policing functions which included an armed capacity) which was in contrast to earlier UN civilian police (CIVPOL) missions. In this situation both RUC – Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and MDP police officers were deployed in support of the civilian administration. Their selection was based on the requirement for particular skills including public order policing and an armed capability, and in the case of the RUC, an experience of divided policing divided societies.

The expertise acquired gained from executive authority missions (and civilian policing missions) was then transferred to Iraq and to Afghanistan where an international mission experience of fragile and post-conflict states was needed. However from 2001, many of these RUC-PSNI officers took early retirement following the police reform process in Northern Ireland and were actively recruited into the private security sector. The counter-terrorism experiences gained by many of these former police officers has been perceived of high value by the corporate sector in Iraq and Afghanistan where large numbers have found gainful employment in the past decade as consultants and advisors particularly around global counter-terrorism strategies.² Afghanistan has been notable for the shrinkage of UK state sector involvement (state personnel within UN, NATO and EU-led missions) where currently there are no more than 20 serving UK police officers deployed. International policing in Afghanistan (and from a wider global perspective) is dominated the growth of mainly US and British private security firms employing former UK police.

In an often marked contrast to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) conflict-related and security driven policing assistance in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, there has been an increased demand for UK police (serving and retired officers) to support broader security and access to justice programmes promoted by the Department for International Development (DfID) and its commitment to global development objectives. These activities have been supported by the cross-departmental Stabilisation Unit to supply both serving and retired officers within a range of international policing missions. DfID's aim is more often than not to promote 'soft power' by fusing development objectives with security sector reform and the promotion of civil, community-oriented styles of policing drawn from the Metropolitan model. The delivery of securitised and/or community forms of policing reflect the broader tensions in policing between coercion and service.

With the provision of overseas policing services rapidly dwarfed by the public provider market, international policing is beset by other challenges. There currently exists no official international policing policy that crosses government departments such as the Home Office (HO), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International

² See Sinclair, G. (2012) 'Exporting the UK Police Brand: The RUC-PSNI and the International Policing Agenda' *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. Advance Access: <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1093/polic/par062>;

Ellison, G. & O'Reilly, C. (2008a) 'From Empire to Iraq and the "War on Terror": The transplantation and commodification of the (Northern) Irish Policing Experience, *Police Quarterly*, 11 (4) Dec. 395-426.

Development (DfID) and Ministry of Defence (MOD), and, which involves the UK police, encompassing both national security and policing strategies. Whilst the [Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) (2010) has determined the direction of national security and the National Security Council has decided on the future positioning of the [armed forces](#) there remains no clear guidance on policing. This lack of protocol and inadequate mapping of what constitutes international policing has resulted in fragmented approaches to delivery services with overlap and tension occurring within government and the public and private sectors.

Private Security Industry

The overseas private security industry is a huge growth area for the UK economy; this sector is now valued at £1 billion and offers policing and security services across the globe. The commercial security market has penetrated the international policing community and encompasses not only private security companies but an increasing range of *ad hoc* police advisors and mentors to overseas governments. Further complexity comes not only from the different types of private security companies (PSCs) but also the wide range of services being offered to clients, including governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations like the UN, and other private companies. Broadly PSCs (for example: Aegis Defence Services, Control Risk, Armour Group Security and Corinthian Protection International) provide operational or tactical and logistical support; security and/or policing services and military advice and training across the world. In addition to this expanding sector, other traditionally non-security institutions (including institutions that offer risk financial risk management and corporate governance) now offer elements of capacity and capability-building within developing, post-conflict and fragile states.

The UK, despite having been closely associated with the world of private security and military services for almost five decades, has had little policy engagement and to date there is no formal regulation of this industry. In 2002, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee put forward a [green paper](#) 'Private Military Companies' outlining legislative options for 'the control of private military companies which operate out of the UK' through regulation which would include licensing and registration procedures. Subsequently the British Association of Private Security Companies ([BAPSC](#)) was founded in 2005 to encourage the government to develop regulation for the industry. Ostensibly BAPSC members are required *in theory* to operate to strict codes of practice and rules of engagement, and, comply fully with the rules and principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law and established an International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers in October 2010. *In practice* the lack of official regulation will fail to prevent the occurrence of a possible future ['Blackwater'](#) incident. Despite this risk, it is generally accepted that regulation (unofficial or otherwise) will be good for business, serving to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate private companies.

Middle East

The unrest that developed across the Middle East and North Africa from December 2010 – to become known as the Arab Spring - has created new markets for international development of which security sector reform is seen as a key dimension. Due to historic links the Middle East has become a highly lucrative market for the provision of policing services whereby senior former police officers move seamless from the state to the corporate policing world via the so-called 'revolving door' promoting particular dimensions of UK policing. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) have 'recruited' former senior UK police as police and strategy advisors to the Interior Ministry. In addition, former members of the RUC-PSNI now provide community policing services, (which can be described as the police having an engagement with the community and allowing that community to define policing priorities, and, in determining and implementing locally acceptable solutions to those problems), as locally recruited Warrant Officers (or police constables) to the Abu Dhabi Police. In addition, there is

a large pool of former UK police operating as strategy advisors in Abu Dhabi. Furthermore a growing number of ex police now provide ad hoc training and consultancy services within the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar (the forthcoming World Cup has provided ample opportunities). Former senior UK police have also been recruited as government advisors to both the Bahrain and Qatar governments including [John Yates](#) former Assistant Commissioner in the London Metropolitan Police Service headed up the MPS Special Inquiry Squad and resigned in July 2011 over criticism of the July 2009 review carried out of the New of the World phone hacking scandal. Yates was recruited by the Bahrain government as a police advisor. Equally [Sir Ronnie Flanagan](#) is another who has joined this growing elite of former senior officers who have found fame and fortune within Middle Eastern government circles.

Whilst there has been a tendency to pay lip service to the adoption of civil policing styles (from the period of decolonisation through to the present day), which have included human rights training and community policing, there has also been a need for more militarised / securitised forms of policing including public order management and high-end intelligence gathering and surveillance capabilities. Often it is this latter dimension that has been the principal driver of international policing, both officially, but more importantly unofficially, via a dense network of security consultants and advisors. Yet the ease with which there has been a 'gold rush' in corporate / private sector policing and its related activities has raised concerns for ACPO and other senior British police in relation to the validity of policing services offered and whether there will be longer term reputational damage to UK policing from a global perspective. There are critical lessons to be learnt from the ease with which UK policing has been outsourced and whether in the longer term this may prove detrimental not only national policing values but also questions of national security.

1895 words