The British Policing Model: New Crime Patterns and Evolving Communities

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The British policing model traces its lineage through several centuries. A defining moment in its development came in 1829, with the establishment by Sir Robert Peel (then Home Secretary) of the Metropolitan Police (MPS). This ‘new police’ was established under a core set of ‘Peelian Principles’ (Emsley, 2014), still recognisable and highly cherished in contemporary British policing. Peel’s conceptualisation of the ‘police mission’ being that of crime reduction and preservation of order, delivered by ‘citizens in uniform’, in a constabulary structure, ‘policing by consent’ through public support and accountability, established the fundamental characteristics of British policing (Williams, 2012). The model today can be thought of spanning four conceptual tiers, namely the transnational, national, regional and local. Inter and intra-tier concerns include governance and accountability, legitimacy, performance, training and professionalism, ways of working (including policing
strategies, information sharing and multi-agency collaboration), workforce diversity and skills, criminal intelligence and crime analysis, demand and supply-side management (such as crime reduction and organisational sizing) and operational culture (Loftus, 2012, pp. 187-198). Tautological it may be that policing is a function of the police. It is however important to recognise and consider the effects of pluralisation and the continued extension of the ‘police family’ in the context of each tier. In this sense, policing is definitionally nuanced, services being delivered by public, private and third sector organisations in addition to traditional policing ‘institutions’ (Rowe, 2013, pp. 213-236).

The transnational operating context of British policing is that of globalisation and global capitalism, free trade, European Union (EU) expansion, the information revolution, transnational crime and terrorism, international conflict, climate change, population mobility and displacement, refugee crisis and economic migration. Nationally, the operating context spans multiculturalism and challenges of social cohesion (Sandbrook, 2006, pp. 308-347), the rise of identity politics and secularism (Wolffe, 2007) and declining relevance of class (Loftus, 2012, pp. 42-46). Regionally and locally, urban transformation, demographic change and internal migration, austerity, industrial decline (Marwick, 2003, pp. 235-260), an aging population and
Straining public services provide a context in which policing is increasingly delivered through multi-agency response.

To help 'constrain and tame' this complexity, the key structures of the British policing model are first sketched, bottom up, from local to regional to national to transnational foci. This sketch is to a level sufficient to identify the key challenges for critical discussion, and is (by intent) not exhaustively descriptive. Having constructed and ascended the multi-tier model and recognising the hegemonic and pervasive nature of globalisation (Croall, 1998, pp. 98-115); critical analysis of the challenges faced from new crime patterns and evolving communities then follow in reverse order (descending from the transnational context back to the local).

Beginning at ‘ground level’, the British policing model is constructed from a base of 43 constabularies in England and Wales. Each constabulary (typically organised at county or metropolitan level) is horizontally integrated across multiple public and private sector agencies, delivering service to diverse communities. Each constabulary enjoys a high degree of operational independence, overseen by a Chief Constable who in turn is accountable to an elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).
Working alongside their PCC, Chief Constables must ensure they have sufficient capacity to deliver locally and as part of an integrated pan-national (and increasingly pluralised) policing response. The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) (Home Office, 2015) provides a ‘frame of reference’. This illustrates the scale of challenge facing Chief Constables, namely the breadth of local policing demands and the ‘capability surplus’ that must be ready to supply into the national system if called upon. The role of the PCC raises questions about the potential dangers of political interference (Newburn, 2012) and the virtues of greater public scrutiny of police performance (Rogers, 2013).

Local policing services are delivered by (predominantly unarmed) sworn officers, Special Constables, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), private contractors (particularly in back-office and outsourced functions) and a swathe of private sector security personnel. A range of policing strategies are pertinent including Community Oriented Policing (COP), Problem Oriented Policing (POP) (Goldstein, 1977) and Intelligence Led Policing (ILP) (Ratcliffe, 2016, pp. 49-67). The extent to which policing strategies are harmoniously and synergistically aligned and ‘fit for purpose’ within diverse operating contexts must be considered.
Challenge areas to be critically discussed at this level of the British policing model include police ethics (Neyroud and Beckley, 2008, pp. 79-93), legitimacy and complaints, pluralisation, risks of politicisation of policing, contribution to the containment of national security threats including terrorism and serious and organised crime, the diversity agenda, police training (Goldstein, 1977, p. 283) and culture (Loftus, 2012), community reassurance and trust (e.g. Community Safety Partnerships and Neighbourhood Watch) and crime reduction strategies.

Ascending from localised ‘county and metropolitan constabularies’ to regionally aligned policing capabilities, on this ‘mezzanine’, three structural patterns are observed. The first is co-ordination of regional counter-terrorism response, the second the co-ordination of serious and organised crime response and the third, aggregated capabilities shared regionally across constabularies.

Taking the first pattern, 5 regional Counter Terrorism Units (CTUs) are supported and supplemented by an additional 6 Counter Terrorism Intelligence Units (CTIUs) across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (National Police Chiefs Council, no date a). Counter Terrorism Command (CTC) within the MPS takes overall lead force role across the National Counter Terrorism Policing Network (NCTPN). The CTU and CTIU structures somewhat resemble fusion centres, a post-
9/11 homeland security innovation in the United States. The MPS lead role in counter-terrorism response, by contrast, dates back to the formation of the Special Irish Branch in the late 19th century (Wilson and Adams, 2015, pp. 1-37).

Taking the second pattern, Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCUs) have common design characteristics and provide shared services including criminal intelligence, prison intelligence, fraud teams, asset recovery, cybercrime, and protected persons (witness protection) units. The 9 ROCUs in England and Wales are primary interfaces between the National Crime Agency (NCA) and local constabularies and provide ‘points of connection’ into the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN). ROCUs deliver serious and organised crime response at a regional level, with economies of scale and best practice development through shared delivery capability (HMIC, 2015, pp. 15-26).

The third pattern to consider at the regional level relates to emerging shared capabilities created through collaboration between two or more ‘neighbouring’ constabularies (West Yorkshire Police, no date). These are important as they arguably signal an emerging ‘federation’ of local policing arrangements. This pattern is more ‘bottom up’, with shared structures being developed through symbiotic local arrangement and driven by economies of scale. Regionalisation of counter-terrorism
and serious and organised crime response is more ‘top down’, driven by national security imperatives.

Challenge areas to be critically discussed at this level of the British policing model include horizontal and vertical co-ordination of resources across local forces and aggregating counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime response into coherent regionalised capabilities. The public’s understanding of and engagement with policing beyond local level is likely to be very limited. Accountability and public legitimacy must therefore also be considered.

Ascending further, local and regional structures vertically integrate into nationally aligned policing capabilities. Pan-national organisations and units include the NCA, and those within the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) portfolio (National Police Chiefs Council, no date b). Specialist national policing capabilities such as British Transport Police, Ministry of Defence Police and Civil Nuclear Police are situated at this tier and can therefore be organisationally contrasted with the predominant constabulary structure of local policing.

The NCA is structured into an Economic Crime Command (ECC), Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP), Border Policing Command and Organised
Crime Command (National Crime Agency, 2016). The NCA is intelligence-led, aligned to UK Government’s CONTEST strategy (Foley, 2014, pp. 78-84). It is notable that the ‘same’ strategic architecture is used for countering serious and organised crime as it is for counter-terrorism (National Crime Agency, 2015, p. 8). Given the NCA’s intelligence capabilities, the cross-over between terrorism and serious crime (such as kidnapping, extortion, drugs, firearms, fraud and counterfeiting) and close alignment with CONTEST, it has been suggested that the NCA will eventually take over lead counter terrorism role from the MPS (Dodd, 2016). The NCA also provides a National Cyber Crime Unit (NCCU) and co-ordinates with the cyber units inside the various ROCUs and with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) at Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ).

In overseeing national standards and police performance through its annual Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) assessments, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) fulfils a central quality assurance and governance function (HMIC, 2016). The College of Policing delivers national training standards and signals high focus on police professionalism. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) plays a central role in ensuring fairness and transparency in the investigation of public complaints against the police.
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(Independent Police Complaints Commission, 2016). The National Black Police Association (NBPA) and the evolution of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) associations is important in the context of national strategic response to diversity, particularly post-Macpherson (Holdaway and O’Neill, 2007).

Common processes and technological infrastructure including the National Intelligence Model (NIM), Police National Computer (PNC), Home Office Large Major Enquiry System (HOLMES) and National DNA Database are examples of key building blocks and cement that construct the architecture of the policing model at national level.

Challenges areas to be critically discussed at this level of the British policing model include public awareness and understanding of national policing bodies, transparency and accountability and seamless integration with local, regional and transnational policing structures within and beyond Europe. This is particularly important in the collection, analysis and dissemination of intelligence, close partnering with intelligence services and the multiple agencies (George and Whatford, 2002) that make up the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) within MI5.
Ascending yet further, vertical integration with transnational policing and judicial structures such as Europol (Cameron-Waller, 2008), Interpol, the United Nations Police (UNPOL), the International Criminal Court (ICCt), customs agencies and border protection forces are relevant, as is the role of policing in international development and state capacity building (Rowe, 2013, p. 173).

The NCA is a key interconnecting component from the national to transnational domain. The NCA’s UK International Crime Bureau provides the UK National Central Bureau for Interpol, the UK Europol National Unit and the UK SIRENE (Supplementary Information Request at the National Entries) Bureau (National Crime Agency, no date). This positions the NCA as a key bridge between the transnational and national policing domains.

Challenge areas to be critically discussed at this level of the British policing model include the ability of British policing to lead and support complex transnational investigations, interoperate both procedurally and technologically with disparate pan-European and global partners, provide advisory services and capacity building capabilities to post-conflict or fragile states and to operate within increasingly pluralised global security environments (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012, pp. 53-77).
Intelligence sharing through the Schengen Information System (SIS), management of European Arrest Warrants (EAW) and extradition arrangements are important topics and challenges as Britain negotiates its exit from the EU (Black et al., 2017). Having sketched (an abridged) outline of the structure of the British policing model, it is important to critically discuss the challenges it faces from new crime patterns and evolving communities. In building an analytical handrail, it is helpful to consider a central question, namely, what are the sociological and criminological trends that most significantly challenge the model at each tier? Sociologically, EU migration and accession, internal migration, post-war Afro-Caribbean immigration (Sandbrook, 2006), emerging and established diasporas, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) community evolvement, austerity (Williams, 2017) and localism provide rich sources. In criminological terms, cybercrime (Jewkes and Yar, 2011), modern slavery and human trafficking, organised immigration crime, child sexual exploitation (National Crime Agency, 2017), drug trafficking and cultivation (Gentleman, 2017), identity theft, domestic violence (Mama, 2008) and hate crime (Chakraborti and Garland, 2009, pp. 107-123) provide useful analytical categories.

Descending back through the model from transnational to local contexts, the ability,
flexibility and resilience of the policing model is considered in face of these significant sociological and criminological forces.

Transnational policing must fulfil a highly complex role in the interdiction of organised crime and terrorism. Serious organised criminals are adept at exploiting weak governance and state fragility, creating hybrid business models of licit and illicit enterprise. The end of the Cold War coupled with European expansion acted as accelerants for the transnational growth of the Russian Mafia and other Eastern European criminals. An unsavoury stew of criminality risks boiling over on the transnational hob.

Women and children are trafficked for prostitution and slavery. Refugees and economic migrants, drugs, weapons and counterfeit goods are smuggled across international borders. Extensive immigration into EU countries (recently amplified by wars in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Libya) necessitates ‘flawless’ intelligence sharing and integrated European response. Free movement of people and goods across Europe presents critical challenges in terms of freight, air and port security.

The ‘open and highly interconnected’ international finance system provides opportunities for fraud, money laundering and tax evasion. Cyberspace is nebulus
with hidden dangers in the deep and dark web (Goodman, 2015, pp. 466-512). Cryptocurrencies and increasingly sophisticated malware provide new opportunities for cybercriminals and cyberterrorists, posing significant challenges to policing in terms of their sophistication and scale.

Foreign criminals are targeting Britain from within and from without (Europol, 2017). Boiler room scams (Financial Conduct Authority, 2016) launched from Nigeria penetrate the homes of middle-class suburban England. British criminals are operating likewise against foreign states and citizens. This generates not only new patterns of crime, but exacerbates old patterns of fear.

Crime prevention, disruption and investigation at transnational scale therefore requires skilled resources (across a highly diverse crime landscape), experience of global cultures, languages (for intelligence gathering and analysis and partner collaboration) and legal systems. This comes at significant cost in terms of recruitment, training and retention of personnel as well as development of best-in-class technologies. As transnational policing is largely conducted ‘above the state’ there is a risk that transparency and accountability becomes weakened and policing in the national realm is ‘tainted by association.’ Perhaps more likely, policing
demands on the international stage may ultimately ‘draw out’ high calibre resources into the highest realms of high policing (Brodeur, 1983), impacting on local and regional delivery capabilities within the UK. As globalisation’s inexorable march continues, demand for transnational investigations seems certain to increase. The British policing model must consider and address strategically, the capabilities required to combat transitional crime now and in the future. In so doing, and in adopting a preventative doctrine it must situate its resources to optimally disrupt criminality close to source.

Stepping back down into the national realm it is centrally important to consider challenges that threaten national security (National Crime Agency, 2017, pp. 13-27). Terrorism, Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA), money laundering and cybercrime are therefore thematically examined.

Terrorist threats are evolving with traditional terrorist structures and capabilities being supplemented by low-capability loan actors radicalised and activated from a distance. The return of British and EU nationals from conflict zones in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan poses a significant problem for the security services. As diasporas have grown throughout Britain, tracing the inflow and outflow of the
legitimate and the nefarious has increased in complexity and scale. Identity fraud creates opportunities for terrorists to acquire travel documents, thereby defeating increasingly stringent border controls. Technological advance such as the ability of terrorists and criminals to use 3D printing to produce firearms defeats border and cargo controls (Greenwood, Slack and Robinson, 2013). Policing must therefore be equipped to combat highly innovative emergent threats.

CSEA is considered a threat to national security and new crime patterns have been evolving including online image offending, grooming, web cam exploitation (Telegraph, 2017) and blackmail. Contact child abuse in Britain and offenses against children committed by British nationals abroad are also salient. The NCA’s CEOP command works in both the transnational and national domains with numerous partners including those in the technology industry to help prevent, detect and prosecute CSEA related crime. Education is a central role in preventing future crimes and forms a key aspect of safeguarding. The role of the police in educating potential victims and their families about online and offline threats is vital.

Large-scale money laundering is a threat to national security as it risks inflicting serious damage on Britain’s reputation as a leader in global finance (HM Treasury,
2015). Interdiction of financial crime at scale involves multi-agency response including Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), banks and other private sector entities. As with counter-terrorism response, delivery of coherent, effective and scalable national capabilities presents significant challenge. Shell companies, corruption and technological innovations such as cryptocurrencies, end to end encryption and the dark web are some of the complexities that investigators must be skilled in navigating. Pluralisation is an increasingly important factor in creating multi-agency capabilities, comprising centres of excellence and pools of skilled resource.

Cybercrime and cyberterrorism attacks, be they directed by hostile foreign intelligence services, organised crime syndicates, hacktivists or script kiddies are significant in number and potential sophistication. Phishing and ransomware attacks against the National Health Services (Graham, 2017), cyberattacks on Parliament (Maidment, 2017) and ‘crimeware’ attacks targeting UK banking systems (Wyke, 2014, pp. 26-30) are all assaults on national infrastructure and services. The Internet of Things (IoT) and the exponential proliferation of connected devices opens the potential attack surface to unprecedented levels (Naughton, 2016). The ability of the
policing model to deal with prevention, detection and prosecution of cybercrime at scale in the ‘grey space’ of the Internet is debatable. The NCA and NCSC play key roles, in conjunction with cybercrime units in the various ROCUs. The aspiration of police services to become more ‘digitally enabled’ is laudable, however there will be new challenges in terms of cyberthreats to digital systems and policing applications. A major compromise of these systems could have serious impact on public confidence. Digital transformation in policing is therefore likely to proceed with both ambition and caution.

There are numerous other criminal threats at the national level including acquisitive organised crime, interrelated and signal crimes such as drug cultivation and human trafficking and modern slavery. It is important to recognise the complexity and scale of challenge in the prevention, detection and prosecution of many of these crimes. This demands exceptionally skilled resources, working in a pluralised environment to exemplary standards, a coherent purpose, with rigorous professionalism and accountability. There are ‘blurred lines’ between the national and transnational policing domains, complicating both analysis and service delivery. In matters of
national security, the public is likely to be highly intolerant of mistakes, illustrating that ‘high policing’ is something of a ‘high wire act.’

Stepping down again, in the regional context, it is important to consider degrees of variation between regions, with different communities, demographic trajectories and social challenges. Evolving communities and diasporas are unlikely to neatly align to formalised regions or local constabulary boundaries. Communities themselves cannot always be neatly labelled and boxed into coherent homogeneous units (Waddington, 1999, pp. 222-223). Regionalisation of social and political order through increased devolution could be an interesting factor in the trajectory of constabulary consolidation.

Implementation of policing strategies at regional level must support both national and local policing needs. It is therefore important that criminal intelligence aligns with intelligence led policing strategies at local level and through the NIM in support of national policing, the NCA and other agencies.

Returning finally to ground level and local policing, constabularies arguably face the greatest challenge. As the primary interface between policing and citizens they must be equipped to deal with highly complex, racially, ethnically, economically and...
socially diverse communities. Police professionalism and civility is essential if public trust and confidence is to be earned and maintained. The requirement for new police recruits to undertake degree level education from 2020 is highly significant (BBC News, 2016a). The impact on police professionalism is likely to take many years to assess, however there will likely be an ‘immediate’ impact on cost and availability of suitable recruits.

A key challenge for policing is to both integrate and keep pace with shifting demographics, ensuring capabilities are aligned and attuned with community needs. The agility of policing has been found historically wanting in this regard as evidenced by the Scarman (Scarman, 1982, pp. 30-31) and Macpherson reports (Macpherson, 1999). Allegations of over-policing and under-serving sections of society pose significant risks to police legitimacy. Failure to protect vulnerable children from sexual predators in Rotherham risked significant reputational damage to local government and policing (Jay, 2014). A lack of courage to tackle difficult and potentially divisive social issues is injurious to police and political legitimacy.

The importance of BME recruitment, ethics and training, cultural transformation and community policing in addressing these challenges cannot be understated, although
policing (no matter how elegantly structured) will ever solve all of society’s problems (Reiner, 2010, pp. 253-254). Recruitment of BME officers must address the significant levels of ‘minority underrepresentation’ across the service. Officers must also develop the cultural and language skills to help them navigate the multicultural patchwork of the modern British beat.

Localism has arguably filled some of the void left by the decline of organised religion. New forms of community leadership and informal social control are ascendant. Trends such as urban gentrification risks displacing established communities, at the same time collocating the urban elite with the urban dispossessed. This creates the potential for opportunistic crime, suspicion, fear and division. From large conurbations to small northern towns, many social, cultural, political and religious grievances have been imported through diasporas as ‘world politics’ plays out on local stages.

An array of new crime patterns including Female Genital Mutilation (Siddique, 2016), honour violence (Talwar and Ahmad, 2015), forced marriage (Home Office: Forced Marriage Unit, 2017), CSEA (Crown Prosecution Service, 2016, p. 11), acid attacks (Marsh, 2017), modern slavery (Townsend, 2016), drug manufacture and farming
(Gentleman, 2017), gang crime (Walker, 2017), hate crime and hate incidents (such as antisemitism and Islamophobia), cyberbullying, sextortion (Hopkins and Solon, 2017) and even revenge porn (BBC News, 2016b) must be addressed in addition to property crime, fraud, traffic offences and anti-social behaviour.

The police role in counter-terrorism, civil order control and the question of arming the police (BBC News, 2017) are all central to the debate on legitimacy and acceptance. In developing intelligence-led policing capabilities, it is essential that communities are the ‘eyes and ears’ for supply of criminal and terrorist intelligence. Building these networks is perhaps the most important and complex capability within the British policing model, demanding highly skilled practitioners and exceptional levels of community trust (Innes, 2006).

Finally, in the local context, scale is an increasing problem due to austerity cuts and reduction in police headcount (Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, 2015). Delivering against local policing strategies and managerial targets at the same time providing for mutual aid support and capacity into the national policing network is a complex requirement. Fear of crime, the resulting ‘reassurance gap’ and demand for higher police visibility necessitates increased levels of community
policing and foot patrols. Scaling through volunteers (such as Special Constables and PCSOs) has been a broadly successful approach (Sutherland, 2014), however developing and maintaining professionalism across an increasingly pluralised and multi-skilled response is non-trivial. In a world of 24-hour news and instantaneous communication, the police are increasingly expected to engage with citizens across multiple channels (including social media) in real-time. Citizen expectations are somewhat inflated and with cuts in social care, mental health and other public services, local policing is ‘taking the strain’ as the ‘agency of last resort.’

In conclusion, the British policing model is a multi-tiered, complex interconnected structure delivering capabilities at transnational, national, regional and local levels. Trends including globalisation, the information revolution, immigration, liberalism, individualism, secularism and ageing population are manifesting fundamental changes in the ethnic, religious and socio-economic landscape of British society. Diaspora communities in Britain date back centuries, but EU free movement, economic migration, refugees and internal population growth is driving an unprecedented pace of change. This pace is likely to accelerate with global conflict and climate change a key factor in population displacement. The diversity agenda
has risen in importance after World War II, with significant post-colonial immigration. With the decline of the established religion and increasing liberalism and secularism, social attitudes and norms have shifted. The rise of gender politics, LGBT issues and disability rights have combined with debates on race, ethnicity and religious affiliation and freedom. Policing diversity, at one time practically synonymous with Afro-Caribbean relations has extended to encompass a vast patchwork of minority communities and identities.

Terrorism, serious and organised crime, money laundering, CSEA and cybercrime are examples of threats to the national security of the UK. Terrorist and organised crime investigations are increasingly transnational in character, demanding seamless integration and collaboration with partner agencies in the UK, Europe and beyond. Intelligence networks and shared capabilities at national, regional and local levels of the British policing model have been established and further structural change is likely.

Citizens expect a highly responsive, visible, professional and courteous policing service. A fear of crime and a corresponding ‘reassurance gap’ indicates a perception that crime is rising and policing capabilities are not keeping pace. The
rise of citizen patrols, private security, community safety partnerships and gated communities are indicators of both pluralisation and an insatiable demand for policing services.

Intelligence led policing strategies and criminal intelligence collection and analysis are a central and increasingly aligned capability in local, regional and national contexts. Community policing and crime reduction (through problem solving methods) are recognised as vital in the development and maintenance of police legitimacy.

The British policing model, like the communities it serves and the threats it addresses is not static. The long-term future of the local constabulary model in England and Wales might be questioned considering the increasing numbers of shared services, regional and national aggregation, private and third sector involvement. The future role of the NCA in leading UK counter-terrorism policing response could also herald change. Digital policing strategies are driving modernisation of Information Communication Technology systems and body cameras, smart devices and improved information flows are helping to modernise and streamline processes. Fundamental change, such as moving to a fully armed
force or a gendarmerie structure seems highly unlikely. This would not simply be an adjustment of the model to changing societal and criminal challenges. Rather, it would be an abandonment of the fundamental principles with which Peel originally established the ‘new police’.
Annotated Bibliography


(Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012, pp. 53-77) provides a useful description of the key elements of the global policing system, from an institutional perspective both in terms of public and private policing. Of particular note is the relative 'newness' of many of the transnational policing structures and the low level of engagement, debate and perhaps even awareness of transnational policing among private citizens. The accountability of transnational policing institutions (to citizens and individual states) must be carefully considered, given their privileged 'above the state' position.

(Bratton and Knobler, 1998, pp. 138-164) William (Bill) Bratton describes his appointment as head of New York Transit Police, the appalling conditions on the New York subway system and the ‘zero tolerance’ approach he took to rectifying the crime challenge based on ‘Broken Windows theory’ from James Q. Wilson and George Kelling. Bratton targeted signal crimes, such as fare evasion, graffiti and as per Wilson and Kelling’s article “aggressive panhandling.” Bratton’s tactics included high visibility policing and large-scale arrest. In aggressively targeting and arresting fare dodgers, police secured convictions for more serious offenses (such as carrying knives and other weapons). Muggings fell because of Bratton’s crackdown and public perception of the effectiveness of the policing function rose. The risk of public alienation seems to have been mitigated by application of the ‘zero tolerance’ policy across New York. The risk however of ‘zero tolerance’ methods backfiring and exacerbating social or racial grievances, do in some circumstances seem very real (taking Operation Swamp in Brixton in 1981 as an example). The success of Bratton’s implementation of Wilson and Kelling’s theory placed him in line America’s top policing role, that of Commissioner of the New York Police Department.


(Cameron-Waller, 2008) describes the history of Europol, from its original proposal by Helmut Kohl in 1991. The structure and remit of Europol is described highlighting its role in information analysis and the production of the Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCA) and the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT). Links between EU member state police functions and the Europol functions are discussed, contextualising Europol’s role in drawing together criminal intelligence from a wide range of ‘national sources.’ The preservation of links between national policing structures such as the National Crime Agency and Europol post-Brexit are key considerations, as are links between European intelligence agencies.


(Chakraborti and Garland, 2009, pp. 107-123) discusses hate crime policing. Throughout the book they consider a range of hate crime causes including racism, sectarianism, religious hatred and homophobia. The under-reporting of hate crime is suggested, with a causal link to poor relations and trust between some minority communities and the police (although improvements post-Macpherson are also acknowledged). The definitions of ‘hate incident’ and ‘hate crime’ are likely to cause confusion, particularly among victims. In recording hate crime, discretionary power of the individual officers is largely (if not entirely) removed. The online disinhibition effect and the rise of social media is an enabler for online hate crime. Responses to terrorist incidents for example might include a storm of vitriolic comment on Twitter or Facebook. Policing hate crime in physical and virtual spaces is therefore complex. Increased reporting of hate incidents and hate crime (directly) to the police could be an indicator of developing community trust. Trust relations could equally be developed through organisations like Tell MAMA (countering Islamophobia), Stonewall (countering homophobia) and the Community Safety Trust (countering antisemitism). This underscores the importance of community representation, policing partnerships and pluralisation.

(Croall, 1998, pp. 98-115) considers class and economic deprivation as criminogenic factors. Globalisation has led to off-shoring of skilled and semi-skilled jobs, austerity and economic downturn has resulted in zero hour contracts and low levels of employment security in certain job families. Immigration, whilst an important factor in community evolution must be assessed in the context of wider economic cycles and global trends. The perceived existence of a criminal underclass, drawn from the working classes (or those on social welfare) is contrasted with middle class and white-collar crime. The likelihood of prosecution or caution and the social class of the offender may be lead to ‘unfair’ discretionary decisions by police officers. Perceptions of class and criminal tendency are therefore problematic biases in a similar vein to racial stereotyping.


(Emsley, 2014) outlines the Peelian Principles on which ‘new police’ was founded in 1829. Core foci on crime prevention, legitimacy and consent were central to eventual public acceptance (which at inception was far from universally welcomed). In modernising and professionalising policing in England, the continental gendarmerie structure was eschewed (although originally proposed by Peel), on the basis of strident public objection. This resulted in the recasting of the vision of the police as ‘citizens in uniform’, rather than a militaristic or pseudo-militaristic force. With the rise of regional, national and particularly transnational policing structures it is interesting to contrast Peel’s original vision of the ‘new police’ (arguably largely intact at
constabulary level in some policing functions such as Neighbourhood Policing) with the realities of both a global and pluralised policing system and transnational policing structures formed by states with differing historical and philosophical perspectives on policing.


(George and Whatford, 2002) discuss the role of private sector and public-sector partnerships in counter-terrorism response. Increasingly private security guards and security infrastructure (CCTV, access control etc.) is being used to protect private businesses from terrorist as well as criminal threats. In considering the role of the private sector (and citizens) in supporting the government’s counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST), it is notable the degree to which training and communications have focused on countering violent extremism and providing proactive intelligence to police. The National Crime Agency also uses CONTEST (and its constituent sub-strategies) in their work against serious and organised crime. What is striking is the lack of parallel public awareness, education and engagement in
providing criminal intelligence flows into the NCA. This raises questions about how policy makers and the public view threats of terrorism and threats of crime and the acceptability of their roles in the containment of each.


(Goldstein, 1977, p. 283) examines the virtues of tertiary education for police officers, which is salient in the context of new requirements coming into place in the UK in 2020 (requiring new police entrants to either have or embark on degree level education). Goldstein discusses the importance of ‘college education’ in terms of not only core academic content, but in broadening students’ social experience and helping them develop critical thinking skills. In tracing the history of ‘college educated’ police officers, Goldstein cites August Vollmer, a prescient advocate of police professionalism dating back to 1917. The debate over policing and college level education has therefore been ongoing (in the US context at least) for a century.


(Goodman, 2015, pp. 466-512) provides a singularly dystopian view of a possible cybercrime wave, driven by artificial intelligence and crime bots. Although somewhat ‘colourful’ in narrative, there are salient points about the scale and pace of development of sophisticated crimeware tools. Given the emergence of new cybercrime patterns, the ability of policing to cope in terms of both skills and technological capabilities must be questioned.


(Holdaway and O’Neill, 2007) chart the origins of the Black Police Associations and the importance and official support these were given by the New Labour government in the wake of Lawrence and the resulting Macpherson Report. Macpherson’s findings of ‘institutional racism’ against the Metropolitan Police (the scope of the inquiry) have been practically ‘assumed true’ of the other constabularies in England and Wales. The formation of Black Police Associations across all constabularies was encouraged by the government and funding provided to assist in the realisation of this goal. The importance of the diversity agenda and the voice of Black and Minority Ethnic officers in transforming police culture is significant. The question of whether racism has been effectively eliminated remains debatable. Remnants of racism (and other discriminatory practices) may (to some degree) have been driven underground, replaced by covert and more subtle forms. This could be
manifest in stop and search statistics, over-policing and under-serving certain demographics as well as blocking recruitment and career progression of officers from ethnic minorities.


(Jewkes and Yar, 2011) enumerates common categories of cybercrime including online fraud, identity theft, child sexual exploitation, copyright infringement, phishing, malware and crimeware attack, industrial espionage and insider attacks on business by disgruntled employees. Issues with the
under-reporting of cybercrime are explored, highlighting that in some cases there is a lack of awareness of a crime being committed, or an unwillingness to report the offence to police (for example where internal measures are taken within a business itself). The scale of cybercrime and the ability of policing to respond adequately is challenged. A history of cybercrime response is outlined from the creation of the National Hi-Tech Crime Unit in 2001 through to the Series Organised Crime Agency (now the National Crime Agency). Key challenges of policing cyberspace are outlined, highlighting that as in the physical world, the increasing need for a pluralised response has led to multi-agency collaboration in both national and transnational contexts. Cybercrime response within individual constabularies has been somewhat haphazard and given the ‘expansive’ landscape of the Internet, historical approaches seem excessively naïve. Maturing functions within the National Crime Agency, National Cyber Security Centre and Regional Organised Crime Units provides some assurance of a more promising direction of travel. The degree to which these functions are materially improving the UK’s cyber defence posture is unclear. The WannaCry ransomware compromise of National Health System computers could be symptomatic of significant systemic weaknesses.


Loftus, B. (2012, pp. 21-46) - In Chapter 2, the New Social Field of Policing, Loftus explores key sociological trends in British society that have and are impacting on policing and its culture. Whether it be the report of Lord Scarman into the Brixton riots, or Macpherson and the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, British policing sits within a highly scrutinised frame. Lotfus notes that key sociological changes have impacted class politics, particularly with New Labour’s reframing of the core socialist message during the governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. The rise of identity politics and increasing focus on rights of individuals and marginalised groups is an increasing challenge to British policing, not least in embracing diversity across the police service, but in understanding and responding to changes to fundamental social constructs.
such as class identity.

(Loftus, 2012, pp. 187-198) – Chapter 7 provides an interesting discourse on the changing nature of police culture. Loftus highlights improvements in aspects of police culture, particularly relating to racism and diversity. Police culture has of course not only suffered from racism issues. Sexism, homophobia and other discrimination has been problematic. As the police seek to gain and maintain legitimacy across an increasingly individualistic and rights based society, the diversity challenge will only increase. Police culture will therefore need to continue to transform in step with social attitudes, but with greater agility and proactivity than historically demonstrated.


(Mama, 2008) provides an interesting treatise on domestic violence against women in black communities. A key assertion that domestic violence is often hidden is contrasted with a willingness to expose claims of brutality inflicted on men and women within the community by police officers. Mama posits that this external form of brutality is more acceptable for the community to expose, whereas recognition of internal domestic violence is more shameful. This is an interesting narrative as it portrays the police (in this context) as wholly externalised to the community. Tolerance of domestic violence within certain communities or the tolerance of cultural crimes such as honour violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation are also interesting considerations in understanding society and the threats to women in different...
cultural settings. This highlights a link between evolving communities and new crime patterns and the challenges faced by police in understanding cultural complexities and forming strategies to protect potential victims.


Marwick, A. (2003) *British society since 1945*. 4th edition. Penguin Books. (Marwick, 2003, pp. 235-260) discusses major shifts in British industry and the British economy throughout the 1980’s in a period where Thatcherism dominated. Social change in the 1960’s and the industrial malaise of the 1970’s was giving way to a period of privatisation and a major shift in thinking about the provision of public services and the shrinkage of central government. As nationalised industries are sold off, social norms are shifting towards increased privatisation not only of industry, but of the British high street. Over subsequent years, this cascades to a world of increasing ‘target driven managerialism’ in the remnants of public sector and an increasing reliance on and acceptance of private sector providers (of what were historically services provided by government agencies). Changes within policing (most notably managerialism and pluralism), and the rise of the private sector security can be evaluated within this context.

Metropolitan Police (2017) *ONE MET, Digital Policing Strategy: 2017-2020*. London. (Metropolitan Police, 2017) – outlines the Metropolitan Police (MPS) digital policing strategy to 2020. The role of private sector technology providers in supporting digital innovation is important to note. The MPS operates an ‘intelligent client’ function with much of its technology estate outsourced to third parties. Pluralism is clearly an important factor in the ability of the MPS to execute on its digital vision. Resilience to cyberattack will clearly become more and more important as policing transforms to ‘digitally native’ ways of working. Innovations such as citizens being able to file their own ‘crime
reports’, photographic and video evidence and witness statements (for example after a traffic accident) could indicate a shift to more ‘self-serve’ models, reducing the need for police involvement at the scene. In this sense, digital enablement could lead to real-world disengagement. Conversely, new technologies could assist police in better understanding cultural diversity, translation services could help break down language barriers and improved omnichannel engagement could enable policing services to be more intuitive, accessible, responsive and scalable. As society begins to shift towards ‘smart city’ thinking, so too ‘smart policing’ will be demanded by digitally savvy policy makers and communities. Technology is also important in holding police to account, with the rise of citizen journalism and camera phones, police operations are increasingly filmed and scrutinised.


(Neyroud and Beckley, 2008, pp. 73-93) considers the interrelation between police culture, police professionalism and personal ethics. With individual officers having significant discretionary power, the importance of exemplary professional ethics and standards cannot be overemphasised. Personal ethics must equally apply to the private lives of officers. Cases of corruption, falsification of evidence, miscarriages of justice and other morally dubious activities risk serious damage to public confidence as well as injury to victims of crime and the falsely accused. The dangers of ‘abuse of power’ are significant, with discretion being easily twisted into discrimination. Police professionalism not only improves the service provided to the public, but increases the opportunities for officers and potentially improves the quality of
recruits. These are important signals to the public that policing is an intelligent and urbane public good.


(Ratcliffe, 2016, pp. 49-67) provides a definition of Intelligence Led Policing (ILP) and contrasts ILP with other problem-solving frameworks such as Problem Oriented Policing (POP), CompStat and Community Oriented Policing (COP).


(Reiner, 2010, pp. 253-254) challenges the limits of police reform. A point is stressed that the police operate within a chaotic social system, over which they largely have no control. They are in effect responding to complex criminogenic variables with little chance of effecting material change. Reiner draws as bleak conclusion that “policing resources and tactics have at best a tenuous relationship to levels of crime or the clear-up rate.” (Reiner, 2010, p. 254). This suggests that fixating on optimising policing structures and strategies is forlorn and that maximal effect will be gained by focusing on the social causes of crime.


(Rowe, 2013, pp. 239-264) – examines the key challenges and opportunities that technological change brings to policing. Digital policing strategies, new policing applications, smart phones, tablets and laptops, the ‘connected patrol car’, body worn cameras, and improved situational intelligence tools have the potential to improve police performance. Conversely, the proliferation of CCTV, speed cameras, drone technologies (with clear military analogues) and other overt and covert surveillance technologies risks public alienation and injury to police legitimacy. Technology strategists must therefore consider the
potential for unintended consequences. Technophobic and digitally disadvantaged sections of the public may mistrust the purpose, scope and use of new technologies with which they have little understanding or familiarity. Being provocatively dystopian, police officers could become viewed as ‘cyborgs in uniform.’ Technology is also exploited by innovative criminals, for example using drones to fly contraband mobile phones and drugs into prisons.


(Sandbrook, 2006, pp. 308-347) discusses major immigration trends into the UK from the “Caribbean and Indian Sub-continent” (Sandbrook, 2006, p. 308) through the 1950’s and 1960’s. He cites significant shortages of low-paid labour in the British economy as a key driver. The ‘ending of Empire’ and the pending Commonwealth Immigration Act provided an additional catalyst. Immigration from Pakistan and India through the 1960’s and the transformation of urban communities in areas such as Southall in London highlight the significance of these events. The ‘newcomers’ undoubtedly faced significant challenges in terms of racism and discrimination and general integration and acceptance within British society. Police recruitment within immigrant communities was poor. Indeed, foresight of police leadership with regards to diversity was disappointing and remained stubbornly so until the early 1980’s (post the Brixton and Toxteth riots and the Scarman Report). Arguably it was not until the Macpherson report into the death of Stephen Lawrence that diversity within policing was taken forward as a mandatory strategic imperative.

(Scarman, 1982, pp. 30-31) describes the social conditions in Brixton and Toxteth at the time of the 1981 riots. High youth unemployment, social disenfranchisement and community tension with the police were notable. Whereas tensions with the Black community was attributed to ‘police harassment’, a perceived lack of support from the police in preventing white racist attacks on Asians created tensions in areas such as Southall. This highlights the problem of ‘over-policing’ and the potential to exacerbate race relations (as was seen in Brixton and Toxteth), at the same time the risks of under-serving and creating the perception among Asian communities that they were unprotected from white racists. The strength of the National Front in Britain in this period was not insignificant. Contemporary parallels with the Britain First movement, the English Defence League and other radical groups such as Combat 18 can be drawn, although their rejection by mainstream British society is highly important and significant. Scarman clearly identified the need to recruit Black and Minority Ethnic officers into the police service, engage in meaningful Community Oriented Policing and called for proactive methods to ensure racism could not persist or flourish within constabularies. The Macpherson report into the death of Stephen Lawrence highlighted egregious failings in the implementation of Scarman’s vision.


(Waddington, 1999, pp. 222-223) in discussing Community Oriented Policing challenges the notion of coherent and homogenised communities. The challenges the British policing model faces in policing highly diverse communities cannot be over-simplified by ignoring key characteristics of diversity and thereby creating a false view of homogeneity and coherence. Rather, Community Oriented Policing must recognise and deal with ‘communities within communities’ and ‘publics within publics’.


(Williams, 2012) places Robert Peel’s role as Chief Secretary for Ireland within the turbulent context of 19th century Irish history. Peel’s formation of the Peace Preservation Force, a forerunner of the Irish Constabulary, constructed along European gendarmerie lines, is perhaps reflective of a
policing response to a “threat to the state” rather than a “threat to public order” (Williams, 2012, p. 53). As Peel takes his experience and learning from Ireland, his recasting of the British policing model as a civilianised constabulary reflects that policing is fundamentally a response to problems of social order, rather than a militaristic response to insurrection of the citizenry of the state. The British public rejection of the European gendarmerie style of policing is important as it was clearly considered disproportionate, foreign and antagonistic.


(Wilson and Kelling, 1982) in their seminal paper ‘Broken Windows’ examine the effect of seemingly trivial crimes in creating large-scale community ruination. Trivial crime or even public nuisance (such as the untended broken window, graffiti or aggressive begging) “signals that no one cares” (Wilson and Kelling, 1982), triggering a downward spiral where minor crime begets major crime. Fear of crime and street level aggravation drives the affluent, law abiding and socially mobile out of neighbourhoods, surrendering communities to further decline, and depriving them of the informal social controls that are essential to their cohesion. The theory posits that with resolute intolerance of minor crimes and careful management of the optics of social order, that the destructive domino effect of a ‘crime cascade’ can be prevented or at least softened. The theory underpins thinking in Zero Tolerance Policing and Neighbourhood Policing, the visibility of police on the beat providing reassurance and a clear signal to community members that their safety and concerns are recognised and appropriately prioritised.

(Wilson and Adams, 2015. pp. 1-37) chronicles the early history of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch and its beginnings as the Special Irish Branch in 1883 in response to a campaign of Irish terrorism on mainland Britain prosecuted by the Fenian Brotherhood. This raises important questions about the ability of Peel’s civilian police to deal with Irish terrorists, and the acceptance by the public of new policing ‘norms’ in response to terrorist threats. The formation of the Special Irish Branch is important in the historical development of the Metropolitan Police, its evolving role in counter-terrorism response, and its current lead role in Counter Terrorism Command. The evolution of counter-terrorism policing, the arming of officers and increasing para-militarism finds acceptability in a public gripped with the fear of terrorist attack. This fear (similarly to fear of crime) creates a ‘reassurance gap’. The public are perhaps becoming more accepting of the militarisation of policing in response to the existential threat of terrorism. The deployment of troops on British streets (OP TEMPERER) at the end of May 2017 could indicate a public willingness to accept even greater militarisation of domestic counter-terrorism. In this sense, certain strands of policing seem ‘far removed’ from their Peelian origins, although as the Special Irish Branch illustrates, this evolution is over a century in the making.


(Wolffe, 2007) highlights the decline in religious adherence in Britain since the end of WW2. Anglicanism in England has suffered the largest fall in membership and attendance as theism in general has declined. Roman Catholicism has fared little better, although has been surprisingly resilient given sexual scandals within the church. Immigration has somewhat bolstered religious life in Britain. Afro-Caribbean influences in the charismatic and evangelical movements, Eastern European Catholicism, observant Jews and
a sizable Muslim community ensures that religion continues to play a significant role in public discourse and community life. The changing nature of religion in British society and the decline of Christianity and rise of Islam introduces diversity challenges that policing must address. This includes understanding a wide range of religious belief and tradition (from Sikhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism and Islam to others). Comparative religion and interfaith understanding is arguably the next frontier in the professionalisation of police diversity and in developing richer understandings of community tension and religiously motivated hate crime.


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Steve Nimmons is a consultant and writer.

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