

## **Forward to the Past: reinventing intelligence led policing in Britain**

On appointment to the most prominent and influential post in British policing, the new Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Bernard Hogan-Howe, spoke plainly about his strategy for policing England's capital city. Focusing on the business of policing as crime control, he declared that he would employ a 'Total Policing' strategy in London (hereinafter referred to as TP) to ensure that criminals were tackled 'decisively and directly' on the basis of 'accurate and reliable local intelligence' (Metropolitan Police, 2011: 1). His words seemed to signal a new commitment to proactivity and intelligence work in British policing.

In this paper, drawing on primary research in the form of interviews with serving police officers and staff, archival and other secondary documentary material, and reflections on my own police career,<sup>1</sup> I examine Hogan-Howe's strategy within a wider discussion of the purpose of policing and of other putatively revolutionary policing strategies adopted by the police in the modern era.<sup>2</sup> I focus on one of the most influential of those strategies, intelligence-led policing (ILP) because as the reader will see, TP and ILP share the same epistemological roots. As a label attached to a diverse variety of intelligence-led strategies, ILP has spread around the globe and become (at least at the level of rhetoric) embedded in the policing systems of many nation states.

Intelligence-led practice in public policing is much older than commonly believed. Indeed, ILP is as old as the UK police service itself. Ironically, even though ILP strategies have gone on to find favour in many nations, they never really have had the impact on mainstream policing in the UK that some would have us believe. Given the rhetoric of revolution and reform that has accompanied the announcement of ILP-inspired initiatives across the developed world (only for them, over time, to fade from the collective consciousness without seriously challenging the dominant reactive policing paradigm) one is entitled to question the extent to which its most recent iteration, TP, provides a template for meaningful reform of modern police agencies.

## **The Purpose of Policing**

Arguments about the duties and responsibilities of the public police inevitably lead to a debate which has never, and probably will never, be settled; the true purpose of policing. Summarising the nuances and complexities of the argument is no easy task but, perhaps crudely put, opinions broadly divide themselves into two ideological camps to which the labels *force* and *service* have been attached.

Despite consistent and credible research evidence to the contrary, those in the force camp (including much of the popular media and many of the police themselves) express a rather traditional view that the true purpose of the police is crime fighting (see for example Reith, 1956). Whilst advocates of the service approach, argue that beyond the populist rhetoric, most police work does not involve crime or any kind of law enforcement activity. Instead, the police deliver a wide range of services that involve ‘something that ought not to be happening and about which someone had better do something now!’ (Bittner, 2005: 161).

The UK police service’s own perspective on its role seems to swing between the two poles of service and force according to shifts in the philosophies and ideals of its ruling elites. However, those have not always been clear to observers because, covertly, senior commanders have employed strategies that they publicly have disavowed; the outward packaging of policing has not always described the contents entirely accurately. For example, in the early years of Britain’s new police, commanders went to great pains to argue that their investigative options were limited by the need to dispel the notion that the police represented ‘continental despotism’ in the form of ‘standing armies, police spies, lettres de cachet and Bastilles’ (Ignatieff, 1975: 26).<sup>3</sup>

From the outset, they claimed to prioritise the prevention of crime over its detection so as to secure public consent for what were highly contentious policing arrangements. In fact, plain clothes officers were employed on proactive operations from the very earliest days of the public police (*The Times*, 1830 November 11<sup>th</sup> cited in Rawlings, 2002). Just four years after the establishment of the new police, its Commissioners admitted that in the investigation of robbery, ‘We have found it better done by persons in plain clothes, who were not thus known to the thieves, both in preventing them and in catching them *when they have been going in*’ (emphasis added) (UK Parliamentary Papers, 1833: vol. XII, pages 407).

In the modern era, with the existence of the public police accepted as a simple fact of life, commanders have been freer to experiment with alternative strategies. Across the developed world, police chiefs have enthusiastically embraced innovative strategies that promised improvements in the operational performance of their forces beyond those that could be realised by the reactive paradigm alone (see for example Tilley (2008) on the subjects of problem-oriented, problem solving and proactive policing). However, researchers have questioned whether these ‘new’ approaches represent real change or simply serve to reinforce the traditional control elements of the rational-legal, bureaucratic, police organisational model (see for example Weisburd et al, 2006 for analysis of developments in policing in the United States and Gill, 2000 for a British perspective).

Notwithstanding that scholarly criticism, it should be no surprise that time and again, commanders and policymakers have launched such initiatives with optimistic messages emphasising the police’s crime-fighting capabilities and highlighting the organisational and personal vigour with which they would be pursued (see for example; Bratton (1998) for a police perspective on what popularly, though arguably pejoratively, has come to be known as the zero-tolerance policing strategy employed in New York City; and Flood (2003) for an explanation of the UK law-enforcement community’s hopes for the National Intelligence Model (NIM), which to many represented the apotheosis of ILP).

Taking visible and decisive action against offenders and, perhaps more importantly being seen to take such action, has proved popular both with communities and with the police’s political masters. There usually is an enthusiastic audience for such pronouncements; not least within the ranks of the service itself where ‘thief-taking and ‘locking up the bad guys’ is perceived as central to the policing mission. Even when voices within the British police service (perhaps most famously, that of John Alderson, chief constable of the Devon and Cornwall force 1973-1982) have argued for less legalistic approaches that recognise that crime as a phenomenon ‘arises in part from behaviour but is also created by rules’ (Alderson, 1979: 5), their messages have been contested by other insiders and rarely have been popular with those on the policing ‘front line’ (Reiner, 2010).

## **Total Policing**

The arrival in Britain of a, much trailed, age of austerity in the public services has served to bring crime-fighting and police performance (subjects that have occupied successive UK governments since the mid-1970s) into even sharper focus. Against that background, the police's much criticised response to the riots that broke out across Britain in the summer of 2011,<sup>4</sup> caused some to question whether elements of the service, particularly the Metropolitan Police, were fit for purpose (see for example, Pilkington, 2011).

The resignation or retirement of a significant proportion of the Metropolitan Police's command team in the same period cannot be attributed to the fallout from that disorder. Of far greater consequence was media and public concern over the influence of the News International Corporation on the police (see for example Casciani, 2012: 1).<sup>5</sup> However, both issues are significant in the context of this discussion because together, they stimulated an appetite for change that first was reflected in the choice of that command team's replacements and then in the repackaging and rebranding of police services in London by that new team, under the banner of TP. TP may be viewed as a rational response to the pressure on the force from its political masters in this age of austerity, to deliver more with less but it seems to me that it is also about doing things and being seen to do things differently, and in the process drawing a line under the recent past.

It is worth assessing the extent to which, beyond the banner headline, TP differs from any other kind of mainstream policing practised around the world. Innes explored the idea of TP in his 2003 book *Understanding Social Control*. For Innes, TP was analogous to the Dutch 'total football' of the 1970s, in which players were expected to adapt to situations as circumstances unfolded, rather than having their responsibilities throughout the game defined by the position for which they originally were selected (Innes, 2003). The term was popularised by Hogan-Howe whilst chief constable of the Merseyside Police and was common currency by the time he left the force in 2009 (Merseyside Police, 2009). In Merseyside, it was claimed that TP recognised the value of a single service approach in which all the component parts of the force worked together to deliver its strategic aims. The force was, in effect, one team contributing to the plan set out by its leaders (Merseyside Police, 2009).

However, Innes (2012) has questioned whether some of the changes that Hogan-Howe has made in London (such as re-designating Operation Trident as anti ‘gangs’ squad). Thus breaking that long-standing and explicit connection with London’s black communities) are consistent with the broader philosophy of policing that he has advanced, and whether they can deliver the kind of policing that Hogan-Howe says that he wants.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding that apparent confusion, other factors largely beyond Hogan-Howe’s control (which include the increasing specialisation of the British police in the modern era and the fiscal pressures on the public services) have the potential to frustrate the Commissioner’s plans and to prevent the reform of mainstream policing in the way that he would hope (Innes, 2012).

Hogan-Howe (2011: 15) has talked about a ‘total war on crime... to keep the criminals on the back foot and support the good people’. A feature of the strategy was that every calendar month the force would come together in a single mission to make ‘a massive impact’ (Hogan-Howe: 2011: 15). One such mission was carried out on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2011 when the Commissioner’s rhetoric was made very real for many individuals in London. Some 4,000 of his officers and staff carried out *Operation Hawk* (Metropolitan Police, 2011: 1). Raids on properties in every one of the 32 London boroughs resulted in more than 300 arrests, the seizure of 40 weapons and the closure of 14 drugs houses (Metropolitan Police, 2011).

Symbolically, the Commissioner took a prominent role in proceedings and he was joined ‘in theatre’ by London’s Mayor Boris Johnson who matched the Commissioner’s rhetoric with his own warning to criminals to ‘Beware - we’re stepping up a gear to crack down on the drug dealers, burglars and thieves that make our [*sic*] lives a misery’ (BBC, 2011: 1). That momentum was maintained when *Operation Hawk* was quickly followed by *Operation Big Wing* which focused on combating robbery, burglary and domestic violence in London and further operations of that kind have followed.<sup>7</sup>

These TP operations should not be judged solely by their headline results. Arguably, they demonstrate a unity of purpose that the past summer’s riots suggested was lacking in London’s police. In that context, they were at least an attempt to regain the force’s legitimacy in the face of criticism from the public, its political masters and even from some of its own members. Also, they were symbolic in that (in a phrase much loved by police commanders in the modern era) they ‘sent a message’ to

criminals in London that under the new Commissioner, the police were back in business with the organisational will, the capacity, and the capability to fight crime in the capital.

In the wake of that first operation, Hogan-Howe gave more details of his plans. In his view, TP requires the delivery of consistent, effective and highly visible policing, which will be achieved by putting ‘fear into criminals, build[ing] trust with the public... doing everything we can that is legal’ (Hogan-Howe, 2011: 15). The similarities between the messages promulgated by the Commissioner and by leading advocates of ILP in Britain, such as former Deputy Assistant Commissioner (now Professor) John Grieve and Sir David Phillips the former president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, are stark. In what essentially was a ‘call to arms’ addressed to the detective force, Grieve (2008), encouraged his staff to be ‘lawfully audacious’ in combating crime. Whilst, Phillips was a committed advocate of the single service approach throughout his career (see for example Phillips, 2008).

Certainly, there are elements of different stratagems in TP. There is some acknowledgment of the value of problem oriented policing and also an emphasis on communities and localism. However, there can be little doubt that the single service approach envisaged, which is intended to unite the whole force; detectives and uniforms; specialists and generalists; police officers and support staff, in a single mission, locates the plan firmly in the ILP milieu.

### **Intelligence-Led Policing in Britain**

There is little in TP, at least in spirit, to distinguish it from the innovative strategies that were alluded to at the beginning of this paper or that were introduced (albeit in a very limited way) by Hogan-Howe’s predecessor Sir Robert Mark, in the 1970s (see Mark, 1978). Nor do they differ very much from the strategies that were endorsed almost two decades ago by the Audit Commission (1993), and advanced in the UK by the Kent force in the 1990s (see Flood, 2003). In each case, the intention was that the energies of the organisation would be harnessed together in the cause of a single mission; crime reduction. Similarly, accurate and timely intelligence was considered essential to the mission’s success. One of Hogan-Howe’s predecessors, who also championed intelligence, Sir John Stevens (2001), argued that in formulating strategy, commanders should focus on their relations with communities because that was where

most police activity was undertaken but for many years local intelligence work was not considered a priority for commanders and it has proved difficult to break with the reactive policing paradigm of the past (see for example Grieve, 2004 and HMIC, 1997).

In the UK today, ILP strategies are underpinned (at least in principle) by the National Intelligence Model (NIM) (National Criminal Intelligence Service, 1999). However, some commentators (including Kleiven, 2006 and John and Maguire 2004) have argued that the NIM, lauded as the mechanism through which ILP would be integrated within the culture of all forces, has had little meaningful impact on operational practice. My own research tended to support that view.

In practice, the term ILP has been confusingly applied to a variety of discrete 'crime-fighting' processes that rely on the efforts of analysts and intelligence specialist engaged in 'crime mapping', 'crime pattern analysis', 'data analysis' and other 'problem-solving' approaches (see for example Cope, 2004; Ratcliffe, 2002; Heaton, 2000). There is another dimension to ILP which also relies on analysts and other specialists but in this second case the emphasis is on the targeting of groups or individuals using covert methods with their arrest, or some other intervention to prevent further offending, the intended outcome (see for example Peterson, 2005; Maguire and John, 1995). My research found that most analytical activity fell into the first category and that as Collier (2006) in his evaluation of the NIM had discovered before me, there was a tendency to put a disproportionate emphasis on acquiring and organising knowledge rather than utilising it in productive ways.

Beyond those approaches, other novel intelligence-led strategies also have come to the fore. I argue that each has challenged but largely failed to overcome the traditional reactive policing paradigm. Arguably, it was the introduction of Unit Beat Policing (UBP) in Britain in 1967 that provided the foundation for modern ILP.<sup>8</sup> As the reader will see, UBP also established the local intelligence system on which the modern intelligence structure in Britain is based. The introduction of the collator, an individual tasked with collecting and evaluating information collected by patrol officers, (see Wilmer, 1970) was a significant milestone in the development of intelligence-led strategies and the specialisation of the police workforce. Though some researchers (including Reiner, 2010 and Waddington, 1999) have been critical

of the police's 'down-grading' of the patrol function that seemed to accompany those developments.

Commonly, the development of ILP strategies has been linked to increasing concerns about organised crime (see for example Wright, 2005; Sheptycki, 2004), the search for 'better evidence' following the discrediting of strategies that ultimately relied on suspects' confessions (see for example Maguire, 2008), and the availability of increasingly sophisticated technologies in the modern era (see for example Ratcliffe, 2008; Manning, 2001). From an Australian perspective, Chan (2003: 656) suggested that the appeal of ILP to police commanders was that it promised new, problem-solving, intelligence-led approaches for dealing with increasingly sophisticated and prolific offenders. Whilst, Reiner (2010: 23) argued that it seemed to provide a solution to the problems associated with traditional policing tactics which were 'spread too thinly over the multitude of potential victims and offenders to be able to achieve much preventative cover or detection'.

The UK Audit Commission was a significant actor in the search for 'best value' in Britain's public sector. Its report on ILP, *Helping with Enquiries: Tackling Crime Effectively* (1993), argued for intelligence-led, crime reduction strategies that targeted scarce operational resources against the criminal rather than the crime. It had a considerable impact on the Home Office and on the police service and stimulated a significant shift in policing discourse. However, what was then lauded as ground-breaking, simply restated observations made by police commanders at least 60 years earlier.<sup>9</sup> This highlights that there is little that is truly new in policing; it also suggests that the police's organisational memory may be less efficient than some might imagine.

Reiner (2000: 217) argued that there were sufficient, well-researched examples of innovative policing strategies to suggest that targeted policing can succeed in having a 'significant, if modest' effect on crime and the fear of crime. By that analysis, TP may indeed deliver marginal gains for the police. However, Skogan (2008: 23) observed that though there was enthusiasm among 'academics and the informed public' for ILP strategies, for policymakers and police commanders 'the political risks involved are considerable, and efforts to change the police often fall far short or fail'. Gill (2000) questioned whether ILP truly represented a fundamental transformation of policing in the modern era or whether it was something that simply



was bolted-on to existing structures. As the reader will see, in the UK it has usually been the latter approach that has prevailed.

### **Unit Beat Policing**

UBP is particularly significant in this narrative because its architects also sought to reconfigure policing to deliver the single service approach favoured by Phillips, Hogan-Howe and other British commanders in the modern era. When it was introduced, UBP (just like Phillips' ILP and Hogan-Howe's TP) was hailed by its supporters as the panacea for policing's ills. Today, there is almost universal agreement that UBP was a complete failure. At best, it was 'misconceived' (Newburn, 2003: 59); at worst 'a disaster' (Mainwaring-White in Newburn, 2003: 60).

Even though the UBP experiment was conducted more than 40 years ago, it is hugely relevant in the context of this discussion because it represented the first comprehensive attempt to revolutionise British policing and the roots of Britain's modern police local intelligence system may be found in that experiment. Its failure should act as a warning to police commanders and to policymakers that the challenges to the success of the 'single service' mission are many and various.

In the spring of 1967, following experiments carried out by the Home Office in the north of England and in Wales, a small-scale UBP scheme was piloted in Kirkby, Lancashire.<sup>10</sup> Results from the pilot were equivocal; researchers found that it produced fast responses to calls from the public for assistance but 'communication with the public was diminished and therefore information did not flow' (Rand, 1970: 14). Therefore, the deficit in intelligence (on which so much depended) was obvious to commanders from the very beginning of the experiment.

That lesson seemed to be learnt, for when the study was extended to Accrington Lancashire, an attempt was made to amalgamate the best features of the Kirkby pilot with pre-existing schemes from the Netherlands, which emphasised the efficacy of foot patrol. Mobile patrols were supplemented with roughly twice the number of foot patrols (Rand, 1970). The (putative) success of this second pilot led to calls for a further experiment in a major conurbation and on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1967, UBP was introduced throughout the city of Birmingham.

Summing up the concerns of many about the limited evaluation of UBP, Rand (1970:15) commented that in just one year, UBP had:

gone from a small experimental scheme to total adoption in an entire police force. [even though] there had not been time to ascertain if there was any significant difference in crime figures, nor had there really been time to allow operational problems to show themselves properly. Even in 1970, it is arguable that there has been an insufficient time interval to satisfactorily review the trends in the matter.

Some data was produced to 'prove' that UBP could deliver the gains the Home Office wanted. For example, it was claimed that its introduction in Newcastle upon Tyne in March 1967 had resulted in an 8.3 percent fall in recorded crime and an increase in the detection rate from 40.8 percent to 45.1 percent (Williamson, 1971: 5). Results like these persuaded the Newcastle force to go ahead with full implementation. However, some questioned the accuracy of the figures that were produced to justify the scheme; to Williamson (1971: 5) they were 'spurious'.

Home Office enthusiasm for UBP was clear; adoption often meant tangible rewards for police commanders (a carrot and stick approach that will be familiar to commanders in the modern era). For example, 'more equipment – cars and radios' was made available to local commanders in Newcastle (Williamson, 1971: 6). However, few attempts were made to sell the project to the rank and file and any marketing of the change was directed solely at the police elite. Two thirds of all the constables affected by the change were not given any choice in their new duties; the lack of discussion with staff associations led the Newcastle Police Federation to make a formal complaint to the chief constable (Williamson, 1971: 10).<sup>11</sup>

Just like the ILP initiatives that have succeeded it, UBP relied on timely and accurate dissemination of intelligence to the front line. The 'collator' an individual (usually a uniformed constable) was appointed in each division. They were tasked with recording, analysing and evaluating (at a rudimentary level) information collected by local officers (Rogers, 2004: 3). The police expected it to produce 'an entirely new era in police records' in which information about communities and individuals would no longer be lost whenever an officer transferred, resigned or retired from the force (Gospel *et al*, 1969: 11).

The collator system represented the first real separation of intelligence work from mainstream operational policing in Britain. The aim was to improve the quality of intelligence through specialisation but there were unintended consequences. Much of the information recorded by frontline staff was perceived to have little intelligence value (Gregory, 1967). Those same staff frequently complained that the information

they provided simply disappeared into a black hole (Wilmer, 1970). However, the fact that unfocused collection failed to benefit the wider organisation indicated significant shortcomings in communication between the intelligence and operational milieus.

Often, the best sources of intelligence were kept from the collator and patrol officers. Information from informers, described in interview by a former detective inspector as the 'life blood' of detectives, was never entered into the local intelligence system. Then, as today, there were principles of 'need to know' and 'duty of care' (particularly in relation to the well-being and safety of the informer) to be considered. However, a former South London collator questioned the extent to which decisions to withhold information in that era relied on any rational cost-benefit analyses. In his view, detectives kept information to themselves because, quite simply, 'knowledge was power' therefore it would never be shared.

In the same vein, a former West London collator described detectives' 'night raids' on his office when they would not need to account for their presence and could research the intelligence records unobserved and unhindered. It was the experience of a member of the police elite, interviewed for this research, that detectives made a contribution to local intelligence but 'it was on their terms... historical rather than current' and therefore in practice rather less valuable. Respondents argued that there was little recognition by the detective force of the benefits of a 'single service' approach in this period.

Despite the fanfare that accompanied their establishment, collators were never seen as central either to the formulation of policing strategy or to the investigative effort. As much as anything, their regular reassignment from intelligence work to fill gaps elsewhere (see Coe *et al*, 1968; Gregory, 1967), revealed commanders' real estimation of collators' worth. Unsurprisingly, many felt that the collator system was the weak link in the UBP chain (Gearon *et al*, 1968). That encouraged the idea that they largely were unimportant and ineffectual; an idea that quickly took root in police research (see for example Wilmer, 1970).

Moreover, the new system did not address the fragmentation of the national intelligence system (Gregory, 1967). That is to say, that the arrangements for passing intelligence around the local divisions, force headquarters, and the newly formed Regional Crime Squads were not improved in any meaningful way.<sup>12</sup> The result was

that the British police service continued to operate in the separate and discrete silos familiar to many who take an interest in policing today.

UBP's impact was intended to be felt far beyond intelligence work. Inspectors would become strategists directing the daily work of sergeants who, rather than spending time checking up on constables, would utilise their forces' new mobility to become leaders and tacticians. Gregory (1967: 8) imagined 'a sergeant in the early hours... marshalling his [*sic*] units and carrying out a sweep through the area, checking persons and property'. In reality, that was little more than a pipe-dream; the reactive paradigm continued to dominate (see Wilmer, 1970; Williamson, 1971).

There was public resistance too, to the new policing methods. In Durham, many complaints were received about the low visibility of the police, particularly in town and city centres (Gearon *et al*, 1969). In rural areas of Bedfordshire, the system had to be 'adapted' to meet low levels of crime and problems with radio coverage (Evans *et al*, 1968). A major issue across England and Wales was the shortage of staff available to implement the new patrol strategy, which the police attributed to Home Office limits on recruitment (Coe *et al*, 1968; Gearon *et al*, 1968). That suggested both an inability to manage the demand for policing services and the inappropriateness of the patrol strategy. Ultimately, the redeployment of 'street police' to motor vehicles to create 'car police', did not achieve the improvements that police commanders or those in the Home Office expected.

The silo mentality, which has always undermined notions of a single service, was never more obvious than in the separate paths taken by the uniformed and detective branches of the service under UBP. The popular perception of the changes brought about by UBP (reinforced by popular British police dramas of the era) is that it was focused almost exclusively on the uniform department. However, the CID was expected to play an important role with divisional detectives being part of the new 'area' units so that the car beats would have been supplemented both by uniformed foot patrols and detectives (Gregory, 1967). In practice the CID's involvement varied from force to force. In some cases, its involvement was desultory (see Coe *et al* 1969 and Gearon *et al*, 1969); in others, it participated but proved incapable of properly managing the new caseloads (see Evans *et al*, 1968; Watson *et al*, 1969; Gospel *et al*, 1969; Bennison *et al*, 1968). Overall, there simply was not the standardisation that was expected (Coe *et al*, 1969 and Gospel *et al*, 1969).

Few meaningful efforts were made to bridge that divide. Summing up the relationship, Rawlings (2006: 65) noted that though UBP provided new opportunities for improved 'cooperation and information flow between the uniform and detective branches', the cultural divide between the two was never overcome because the strategy was presented by police managers without real conviction. Even where silos were broken down, there was only a very limited commitment to joint working.

## **Discussion**

It is almost half a century since UBP was introduced in Britain but the issues that its implementation raises are as relevant today as they were then. Just like TP, UBP was meant to revolutionise policing. The collator system introduced as part of the experiment was expected to revolutionise intelligence work in the mainstream to support a more flexible and fluid patrol strategy. However, it failed to deliver any meaningful improvement in policing services.

Accurate and timely intelligence is key to the success of ILP initiatives but in the UK the problems of collecting, evaluating and, above all, using local intelligence in productive ways have run deep. Despite the development of local intelligence units from the collator system, too often they have been seen as adjuncts to the real business of policing (see for example Cope, 2004). A former senior detective, a trainer at the Bramshill Police College, said that many senior officers could not be made to understand that 'if you don't make any investment in intelligence then you will get back exactly what you put in'. Moreover, the influence of intelligence assessments and local intelligence units in shaping commanders' priorities often was limited by a failure to reconcile bottom-up intelligence assessments with the top-down demands of central government (see Heaton, 2000; Innes and Fielding, 2002).

This was a significant failing in the cases I studied in my research into Sir David Phillips' creation, the NIM. In one, an analyst commented that commanders saw the intelligence assessments they produced as 'paper exercises' that did not influence day-to-day business. Whilst another in a second case said that there was no one at the elite level of their force who truly believed in the value of intelligence. I infer not that commanders were ignorant of the value of intelligence but rather that their primary focus was always on meeting centrally-imposed performance targets for priority crime (usually burglary, robbery and theft involving motor vehicles) even

when intelligence assessments indicated that second-order criminality, petty crime, was of greater concern to their communities; an unintended consequence of the UK police performance regime, which has often been highlighted by researchers (see for example Loveday, 2006).<sup>13</sup>

NIM implementation was further complicated by the contemporaneous introduction across Britain of another putative ‘revolution’, neighbourhood policing; an extension of the existing community policing programme that made extensive use of police auxiliaries (in the UK termed Community Support Officers). The potential for friction between the two change programmes; the NIM focused on priority crime, the neighbourhood policing programme on second order criminality, should have been obvious from the outset. However, few attempts were made to coordinate their implementation. The problems created were not confined to the day-to-day business of reconciling competing demands. They extended to the very top of the police pyramid where competition between the two provided a focus for rivalry between those committed to a public reassurance agenda and others wedded to the idea of policing as crime control.

Under the NIM regime, commanders should have placed a greater value on their bottom-up intelligence analyses than they had hitherto. Policing is never quite that simple; decisions about resource allocation are inherently political. With finite resources, a commander’s decision to favour one crime type or one geographic area, always disadvantages other types or areas. More effective use of intelligence could at least provide an evidence base for command decisions but the pressure to meet the demands of central government *and* the expectations of communities in the modern era; in effect to do or at least to be seen as trying to do everything – to cover all bases, often has been too great. Police officers are ‘can do’ kind of people. However, in my experience, we rarely reflected effectively enough on our work. Whether a task was completed in the most efficient or cost-effective way or even whether it should have been undertaken at all, were matters that were seldom considered (it is no coincidence that of all the analytical techniques available to police analysts, the one used the least is results analysis).

Despite the high profile Government--commissioned Bichard Inquiry into the events surrounding the Soham murders (Bichard, 2004),<sup>14</sup> the seeming inability of the police to use intelligence effectively enough to underpin protective services or to

properly direct operational activities has been commented upon in many studies (see for example, Phillips, 2008; Cope, 2008, 2004 and 2003; Maguire and John, 2006; Innes and Fielding, 2002; Chainey and Ratcliffe, 2005; Grieve, 2004; Sheptycki, 2004 and Gill, 2000). Whilst some failings were the result of individual shortcomings, others were organisational. A chief police officer expressed his regrets that the service had not been more robust in its response to Bichard. He said that the opportunity to talk about the failure of intelligence was missed. Data protection was only a small part of the problem yet this is what, in the main, Bichard had focused upon and the police elite had not challenged that effectively enough.

Some attempts have been made to manage demand, to free up resources that can be targeted against identified priorities. Case screening procedures (that ‘screen out’ investigations, which appear unsolvable) have been embraced in Britain and across the developed world. Screening can allow commanders to use resources that would not otherwise be available to them, to undertake longer-term problem-solving strategies. It also can make a significant contribution to their efforts to do more with less. However, it has not always been popular with communities conditioned, by successive governments and by the service itself, to expect the police to respond to every public complaint (see for example Braga *et al*, 2001).

This issue goes to the heart of police legitimacy. A balance must be struck between the capacity and capability of the public police and the normative expectations of communities. Of course, that equation can be modified either by improving the delivery of policing services or by changing public expectations but, for a variety of reasons, the latter has rarely been considered acceptable. Instead, there have been any number of attempts to reform policing in ways that have sought to reshape government and public identification of its limits. By that analysis, the relatively modest changes introduced by UBP were dressed up in the values of the time; scientific progress and modernisation, to overcome public and political disquiet about police performance. Some of the ILP strategies of the more recent past can also be seen in that light.

In my own research into ILP in the UK I found that very much the majority view in policing was that any commander’s freedom to deploy their tactical resources was strictly limited by the ordinary expectations of the police as an emergency public service. More than one respondent talked about the need for commanders to ‘live in

the day'. The challenge for commanders was to carry out those routine policing functions (referred to by one of my respondents as 'the background policing', by another as the 'ordinary day-to-day work of detection', and by Goldstein (1979: 238) as 'the conglomeration of unrelated, ill-defined, and often inseparable jobs that the police are expected to handle') but to bring the relatively small amounts of resources that were left, to bear against high-priority areas in proactive ways.

One commander said that he believed that '85-90 percent' of police business would be carried on irrespective of any attempt to manage it strategically. He explained, 'It is all about focus... In effect, there's just loads of stuff happening which you have no control over, detectives going to scenes, [crime scene examiners] going out, officers arresting people... You don't really have control'. Gill's (2000) argument that ILP has not really represented a fundamental shift in policing was certainly borne out in my research. As little as 3.5 percent of the operational resources in the police areas I examined were devoted to proactive policing. ILP implemented via the structures and processes of the NIM certainly did not represent the paradigm shift in policing that some would have us believe have taken place.

What those statements demonstrate is that there can be a very wide gap between rhetoric and reality in British policing. The 'reality gap' is not unique to Britain. For example, research into the greatly acclaimed COMPSTAT system in the US, found that COMPSTAT departed markedly from what had been promised and did not "represent a radical transformation in the way these departments have done business" rather, they had "transplanted some new ways of doing business without making much change to some very fundamental structures of police organizations' (Willis *et al*, 2003a: 77).

These examples reveal much about the ability (or perhaps more accurately, the inability) of the police to reshape the social environment. Reiner (2011: 1) has argued for a fundamental re-evaluation of the limits of the public police in the modern era. He noted that the very notion that the main purpose of the police is catching criminals is 'utterly misconceived'. Perhaps, Manning (1977: 17-18) has articulated the challenge that the public police face in this context, better than most. He argued that as they cannot control crime, the police can only ever hope to present the appearance of control. They are:

The targets for ever-increasing public demand for a level of public order and crime prevention they cannot possibly fulfil. They, like any other



reasonable organisation faced with an environment it cannot control, an indifferent audience seldom moved to cooperative action, and massive discrepancies between their claims and their accomplishments, have resorted to the dramatic management of the appearance of effectiveness (Manning, 1977: 19-20).

By that analysis UBP, ILP, and TP may be rational and responsible policing strategies but they can also be interpreted as highly symbolic devices through which the public police periodically has reaffirmed its commitment to crime fighting.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the rhetoric, policing largely remains the business of reacting to events. TP essentially is ILP, albeit ILP reinvented for a twenty-first century audience. In assessing the prospects for TP and other similarly 'revolutionary' policing strategies around the world, different criteria should be applied depending upon the audience for that assessment.

On one hand, the likely impact of TP (or indeed any other new policing strategy) on the policing and social worlds is debateable. In the UK, the record amount of money spent on policing over the last 30 years, much of it on the commissioning and financing of ILP and neighbourhood policing initiatives, has not had the expected outcome of solving social ills. That does not mean that the police have not aspired to excellence; or to be as efficient, as effective, as ethically sound, and as reflexive as they can be. However, it does imply that there are limits to what more officers, more money, more Government support and more innovative policing strategies can achieve. That suggests that a realistic reappraisal of the limits of the public police is long overdue.

On the other hand, in terms of the success of the TP mission, I argue that it is more likely to be considered successful by policymakers and police commanders if those same policymakers and commanders learn the lessons of the past. Specifically, the Commissioner and his command team will need to ensure that his intelligence units are capable of collecting accurate and reliable local intelligence, and that they can use it in productive ways. Commanders must be reflexive and balance the hitting of performance targets (however they are set) with appropriate responses both to their own intelligence assessments and to the concerns of their communities. Moreover, the Commissioner will need to harness the energies of his force in a single mission, and

maintain its focus in the face of existing threats and of those other threats that are bound to emerge from beyond what is now the operational horizon. If those endeavours: send a consistent message; achieve marginal gains in terms of crime reduction and public confidence in the police; and are accompanied by meaningful improvements in operational efficiency (no mean feats in themselves) then Hogan-Howe can proclaim TP a success. Ultimately, perhaps that is as much as any police chief can realistically hope to achieve in the modern era.

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<sup>1</sup> The archival data were collected from Britain's National Archives at Kew or from the National Police Library, Bramshill, Hampshire. The Bramshill data were primary research studies carried out between 1967 and 1969 across England. The studies were completed by officers participating in the Bramshill 'Special Course' – a programme for future police leaders. To the best of my knowledge, none of that data previously has been the subject of scholarly research.

<sup>2</sup> Primary data were collected in the course of my doctoral research into intelligence-led policing models introduced into British policing in the modern era. I conducted primary research, which included interviews with chief officers, Home Office officials, senior police officers and staff. I carried out ethnographic research in two police divisions. See James, Adrian (2012). *The Influence of Intelligence-Led Policing Models on Investigative Policy and Practice in Mainstream Policing 1993-2007: Division, Resistance and Investigative Orthodoxy.* Ph.D. thesis, Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science. Available online at [etheses.lse.ac.uk/221/](http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/221/)

<sup>3</sup> Lettres de cachet - in pre-revolutionary France, the means by which an individual could be sentenced without trial. The letters and the Bastille fortress represented symbols of an oppressive regime.

<sup>4</sup> The riots began in North London following the police shooting of a suspect. They also triggered the outbreak of 'copycat' disturbances in several British cities.

<sup>5</sup> Assistant Commissioner John Yates retired during the course of a police investigation into phone hacking by private investigators hired by News International, the proprietors of the now defunct *News of the World* newspaper. Commissioner Paul Stephenson stood down following an investigation into the employment of a former News International executive as a Metropolitan Police press adviser. Both were later cleared of any wrongdoing.

<sup>6</sup> Operation Trident is a long established specialist detective force that hitherto has been responsible for investigating murder and gun crime in London's black communities. It has now been redesignated as the 'Gang Command'.

<sup>7</sup> *Big Wing* was a controversial strategy employed by RAF Fighter Command in the Battle of Britain. It involved large formations of fighter aircraft deployed in mass sweeps against the Luftwaffe over the English Channel and northern Europe. Its critics claimed that this meant that the fighters were not always available when needed and targets became more vulnerable to bombing attacks. The full significance of the phrase in the policing context is unclear but there is an obvious parallel in the

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deployment of large numbers of officers to carry out coordinated strikes. Of course, the same criticism that was levelled at RAF commanders could also apply to the police; *Big Wing* operations that take officers and staff away from their ordinary duties could mean that neighbourhoods may equally be as vulnerable and unprotected.

<sup>8</sup> Though the UBP system represented the first comprehensive attempt at ILP it may not have been the first attempt to revolutionise police patrol in Britain. Sir Harold Scott, Commissioner of the UK's Metropolitan Police at the end of the Second World War described in *Scotland Yard* (Scott, 1954), the 'Aberdeen Scheme'; a system of mechanized team policing in which the city was divided into districts, each policed by a team of constables under the command of a sergeant who was empowered to arrange the duties of his men as he thought fit. Provided with a police car and two-way telephony, the sergeant would keep in touch with his headquarters and transport men wherever they were required. Scott trialled the system in London but the experiment ended when he left the service in 1953.

<sup>9</sup> The archived minutes of the deliberations of the UK Home Office Committee on Detective Work, record an interesting observation by Wilson, then chief constable of Cardiff, that the scope of detective work should be increased by 'working from the criminal to the crime rather than from the crime to the criminal'. He suggested that in the event of an 'epidemic of crime' of the same type, the police should 'keep a careful watch on likely suspects' and that detective strengths should take this into account (PRO MEPO 2/4967, meeting minutes, Section 217). Evidently, the targeting of suspect individuals or populations, was considered by the police many years before it was endorsed by the UK Audit Commission in 1993.

<sup>10</sup> The Home Office is the UK's lead government department for immigration and passports, drugs policy, crime, counter-terrorism and police.

<sup>11</sup> The Police Federation is the police staff association. It represents officers up to the rank of chief inspector and operates like a trade union but without the freedom to strike or otherwise withdraw officers' labour.

<sup>12</sup> Regional Crime Squads were introduced in 1964 to combat cross-border offending. They were later amalgamated into the National Crime Squad and later still that was subsumed into Britain's Serious Organised Crime Agency.

<sup>13</sup> In June 2010, the UK's Home Secretary Theresa May announced that police performance targets would be abolished in the cause of reconnecting the people with the police (Home Office, 2010)

<sup>14</sup> The Soham murders – in 2002, two 10 year old girls were murdered by school caretaker, Ian Huntley in Soham, Cambridgeshire. It subsequently transpired that the police in the north of England held intelligence that would have prevented Huntley from taking up employment at a school. However, that had not been shared with the Cambridgeshire force.