Capacity building and the Afghan National Police
Views from the frontline

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ABSTRACT
The article reports on a study of an intelligence management capacity building programme involving former Police Service of Northern Ireland officers mentoring members of the Afghan National Police. The study contributes to the formative evaluation of a policy transfer based on principles and practices developed in Northern Ireland. A short discussion of Afghanistan, policing, intelligence management and policy transfer is provided, before attention is given to the capacity building programme. The study is context rich drawing on qualitative data. Analysis draws on face to face interviews conducted with mentors working with the ANP during 2010-2012. Interview questions were broad in nature encouraging respondents to discuss implementation in their own terms. Respondents generally concluded policy transfer was viable but were in a position to provide a great deal of information on the Afghan context and how specific problems occurred during implementation of the capacity building programme. Cultural issues, corruption and resource constraints presented obstacles to the transfer as did the general absence of a bureaucratic basis for managing the ANP. Violence and physical geography presented rather less of a problem than was anticipated. The need to learn more about appropriate inter-personal skills in capacity building emerged as a significant finding. Such knowledge is currently undervalued in policy transfer within the policing sector.

Keywords: Afghanistan, intelligence, capacity, policy transfer

1. Introduction
In this article we examine an attempt to mentor the Afghan National Police (ANP) on the means of intelligence management developed in Northern Ireland during ‘The Troubles’. The particular variant of ‘policy transfer’ that we are interested in is best described as ‘capacity building delivered in the recipient country’ (Goldsmith...
The main mechanism involved the mentoring of ANP officers by former officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which was renamed Police Service of Northern Ireland in 2001 (PSNI). Frequently, theoretical and analytical work has centred on exploring the characteristics or mechanics of policy transfer, or promoting the concept as a normative project for improving policy-making. Surprisingly less attention has been given to systematically theorising constraints on this process, despite widely recorded difficulties with implementing policy transfer (Benson, 2009). This article is focused on lesson drawing from problems evident in the case examined and identified during interviews with mentors working in the field.

It is important to stress that this article examines only one key stage in the policy transfer – the ‘handover’ of principles and practices from the ‘donor to recipient’ – grounded in a specific local context. The emphasis is on the interaction between ‘exporters’ as represented by the agency of the mentors and the ANP ‘importers’. The authors do not purport to examine earlier decision making stages in the policy process, nor the wider political significance of western powers establishing, organising and developing policing in countries emerging from conflict. Nor will we, as has been successfully done by Ellison & O’Reilly (2008), further deliberate the acceptability of the Northern Irish brand of policing as a best practice model for post-conflict transitions. In keeping with the bulk of the policy transfer literature, the article will not summatively evaluate the outcomes or outputs of the policy transfer programme. The study instead focuses on adding a context rich qualitative element to the analysis of the ‘hand-over’ phase in policy transfer. Evidence is based on material drawn from interviews with former RUC/PSNI officers working as privately hired mentors in the field. With the RUC/PSNI having contributed significantly to the development of policing in many countries with a history of conflict, it was logical that former RUC/PSNI officers be recruited to deliver a programme on intelligence management. In an effort to maintain a degree of anonymity for our interview subjects, the programme examined is referred to as Futures, it is a US funded initiative to build the ANP intelligence management skill base. As such the programme is restricted to areas where there is a US military presence. Futures was contractually obliged to confine its activities to building capacity and expressly prohibited from any role in combating the insurgency and any activity that was deemed in the government sphere.

The global replication of policing systems has been in evidence since the age of empires, but the inclination by western powers to action policy transfer in a capacity building context has increased substantially in the last two decades, for example in Timor-Leste, the Balkans and Iraq. By 2000 the International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program (ICITAP), part of the U.S. Department of Justice, was providing police training and development in over 50 countries worldwide with an annual budget of about $50 million (ICITAP, 2013). European countries have committed similarly large sums to this type of exercise. Forms of policy transfer have been much in evidence in programmes aimed at making police forces more effective in terms of ‘standard’ policing objectives and to assist the police align with the principles of democracy and human rights which underpin western style
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policing. While ICITAP has been the dominant agency in policing transfers, the stock of the United Kingdom also remains high as a source of principles and practice (Newburn & Sparks, 2004; Sinclair, 2012).

Afghanistan is a state struggling with the legacy of 40 years of conflict which has taken its toll on civil society, governance and the economy. With many institutions having all but collapsed the country is dependent on the international community (Rashid, 2008). It seems fair to conclude that the Afghan state has never previously monopolised the political space, instead it competes with tribal and religious groups for legitimacy and authority (Hopkins, 2008). While the need to construct an effective police service is a central part of nation building, the Afghan understanding of western democratic policing precepts is weak. The UK Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan told the House of Lords Committee on Europe, that in the past the ANP had been used more as an instrument of the local warlord, than as a manifestation of the authority of the state, and, that corruption and the lack of public trust in the police is still widespread (House of Lords Committee on Europe 2011). While the approach to developing policing capabilities varies considerably in different parts of Afghanistan, a basic assumption holds true – western policing principles and practices are held by the government to be a legitimate basis for capacity building reform programmes. In this sense the policy transfer is formally classed as voluntary rather than coercive.

It is widely accepted that the level of knowledge in the west about contemporary Afghanistan was not high when nation building began. More specifically a lack of evidence on the ANP and its institutional characteristics was expected to present many challenges. That policy ‘exporters’ lack understanding regarding the implementing circumstances extant in the ‘importer’ jurisdiction, is a common feature of policy transfer (Page, 2000). Western mentors unfamiliar with Afghanistan, bar the second hand knowledge of the country derived from the news media, faced a ‘cultural shock’ on introduction to the conditions on the ground. It was accepted that news reports of Afghanistan mostly depict war, social underdevelopment, religious fundamentalism and corruption were likely to influence mentors perceptions. The interviews conducted with respondents did reveal a measure of ‘orientalism’ in their depictions of the Afghans progress to date with the capacity building programme. In interpreting the interview material we were aware of the need to distinguish crude essentialising caricatures of Afghanistan from observations of actual practices.

2. Policy transfer

The process through which policies spread from one jurisdiction to another began attracting the attention of political scientists in the late 1980s. Transfers may be based around ‘soft’ policies – ideas, principles, symbols, rhetoric or alternately be grounded in law or even technology – ‘hard’ policies. Reflecting back on the literature Stone (2012) draws attention to the key fault lines in the way this process is conceptualised in the closely related literatures known as ‘diffusion’, ‘policy transfer’, ‘convergence’ and ‘policy translation’. The early literature tended to be concerned
with classifying how transfers took place. Stone concludes that the US dominated diffusion literature viewed policy as contagious rather than conscious, focusing on how policies spread between state governments in the USA. Conditions of transfer rather than the content of policies were the main concern. In Europe it became clear in the 1990s that there seemed to be a greater propensity for western governments to ‘lesson draw’ (Rose 1993). For Stone the early policy transfer literature is more concerned with the ability of importer governments to mediate their way through institutional obstacles to allow convergence. While the importing jurisdiction might employ different legal or organisational structures to the exporting jurisdiction, a relentless process of policy emulation was assumed to be under way. As Stone (2012, 1-11) observes the early diffusion and policy transfer literatures assumed that the process would be voluntary and constitute the means of promoting best practice based on observations of approaches that worked elsewhere. On the other hand she argues the convergence literature ‘represents an important counter-factual proposition that challenges the logic of choice’. Here the emphasis is on examining how the nation state loses independence over policy in the face of pressure to take part in a globalised political economy where uneven power relationships dominate. Convergence however, is seen to be mediated through the passive or unconscious sharing of meanings, interpretations and rules that arise from participation in the globalised political economy, rather than through direct coercion. The supposed inevitability of transfer, diffusion or convergence evident in the literature has been challenged in recent years by proponents of the concept of policy translation. The emphasis here is on the extent to which policy is adapted by the importing jurisdiction to fit with the local social, economic and political context. The re-assembling of imported policies in an incomplete and highly modified form over a period of years amounts to a process best conceived as germination as opposed to emulation.

It also important to remember that all the usual policy implementation obstacles – lack of resources, disagreement over goals, problems identifying cause-effect mechanisms – remain as potential threats (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). Arguably the policy transfer school in particular has always recognised the lack of inevitability surrounding the attempt to appropriate solutions from another policy jurisdiction. Dolowitz & Marsh (1996) in a much quoted article, argue that the extant political ideology, ‘path dependency’ pressures to adhere to existing policies and procedures using existing institutions and structures, make transfers problematic in some cases. Resource constraints may mean that the available technology or bureaucratic capacity simply do not exist to facilitate a transfer. Benson (2009, 7-10) provides a strong argument for re-directing policy transfer studies towards identifying the constraints on policy transfer. He provides the following scheme for identifying different sources of constraints:

- **Demand** side – how much enthusiasm is there in the importing jurisdiction for the policy in question?
- **Programmatic** – how unique and complex is the policy being transferred?
- **Contextual** – do past policies encumber freedom to adopt the imported policy, do existing structures enable or present barriers, is there political support for the
transfer, is the imported policy ideologically compatible and do resources exist to implement the policy?

- **Application** – do new institutional structures need to be created? Is the policy large scale or small scale and do adaptations need to be made to the policy?

Benson’s categorisation of policy transfer constraints appears to be compatible with certain points raised in the translation literature. In particular the translation emphasis on adaptation and germination, discussed above, seem to have relevance in the current study with respect to interpreting certain contextual and application related constraints. In this article we have treated policy translation as a key element in a broader policy transfer process.

3. **Constraints on transferring policing policy – initial observations**

In this section the transfer of policing policy is discussed in the terms of the constraints Benson (2009) describes as demand, programmatic, contextual and application.

In considering demand in respect of Futures, logic suggests that policing reforms will ideally be founded on a determined political will on the part of the host government to establish western practices and principles (Bayley, 2001) and as such demand must be treated carefully. At one level there is the type of demand we see manifested in the voluntary emulation of policing policies such as the recent creation of American style police commissioner roles in England (Jones & Newburn 2006). Here demand from central government may be high, but at regional levels of enthusiasm is less in evidence. There are also instances of policing reform in developing countries being wrapped up in bilateral aid deals which involve a certain amount of exporter ‘arm twisting’ as well as enthusiasm on the part of the importing jurisdiction (Marenin, 2000), in which cases we can assume in spite of a formal endorsement, enthusiasm will be at best mixed. On another level policy transfer may take place as part of nation building and in the context of a still on-going internal conflict. Demand will be even harder to measure in these highly unstable circumstances where the legitimacy of central government is being violently contested. The policing reforms on offer must somehow also make sense within local policing cultures which may confound assumptions made at the centre. Regardless of the status of the importing jurisdiction it is important to consider whether different levels in the policy chain are equally enthusiastic about the policy in question.

Benson (2009, 8) draws attention to the programmatic constraints associated with the complexity and uniqueness of the policy to be transferred. For example community policing is generally thought to be a hard concept to tie down in precise procedural terms. This is because the approach adopted in community policing must be compatible with the particular patterns of community life where it is practised. There are different sorts of community to consider and consequently a variety of tailored policing practises to be appreciated. Also policing principles and
practices related to the collection of evidence in criminal cases must be constructed in accordance with the legal system in the relevant jurisdiction. Therefore considerable attention must be given to the unique demands of the particular legal system in the collection and integrity of evidence. In both cases the inherent uniqueness and complexity of policies are likely to present programmatic constraints of varying magnitude. The programmatic characteristics of Futures an intelligence management policy constructed in Northern Ireland, was therefore of concern in the current study.

There are many aspects of context in the importing jurisdiction to be considered as likely constraints, such as the political system, physical and human geography, the technological infrastructure, societal culture, finance, the legal system, the history of the police service and its current institutional character. At a basic level policy transfer may be dependent on the ideological compatibility between exporting and importing jurisdictions. For Pritchard & Sinclair (2013), it is the core values of the UK police service, binding community-oriented policing to human rights, equality and diversity issues, that secure public legitimacy. As these values are closely associated with liberal democracy they are unlikely to be well received where this is not the dominant ideology. On the other hand it is noteworthy that transfers may be part of an active movement by the importing jurisdiction to embrace liberal democracy. The ideological position of the importing jurisdiction is therefore not necessarily a constant. As with demand the level at which the policy is being received is also likely to be crucial. Support for democratic policing at the centre by the policy elite, is not necessarily going to be replicated at operational levels.

For Benson (2009, 9) application refers to the barriers posed by the need to create new institutions or extensively reform existing institutions. There is also the issue of scale to be considered – how big is the policy transfer? This could be measured in various ways including geography, budget and personnel numbers. In nation building it is more or less implied that building capacity and institutions will need to take place on a large scale to provide the structures that bind society. The application of the policy transfer we examine was dependent on capacity building, which will normally take the form of a programme to improve knowledge, ability, skills and behaviour in a targeted sector of the importing jurisdiction (Ku & Yuen-Tsang, 2011). Capacity building is seen as a key stage in the transfer of both hard and soft policies to the recipient country and is a stock application concept used by global policing reform agencies such as ICITAP. As Harris (2005) notes the target police organization should be subject to extensive analysis to discover where the gaps in capacity lie. Capacity building will subsequently involve people centric efforts to strengthen society, fostering democracy and build strong institutions. The role of mentors in capacity building programmes is usually thought to involve ‘reflecting on experience’ and as a group they bring quite different skills to post-conflict societies than the ‘security consultants’ who guard and protect, or the ‘gurus’ hired by coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, to ‘strategise’ on policing (Ellison & O’Reilly, 2008, 416-420).
4. The Afghan context

The influence of the Afghanistan state was variable during 2010 – 2013. In Kabul central government had sufficient legitimacy to deliver administration, justice and security, however in other areas its influence was confined to the larger population centres, with the Taliban and local warlord dominating the countryside. The absence of efficient state institutions cannot be underestimated with the lack of a functioning public administration often identified as the single biggest obstacle, to democracy and development in Afghanistan (Cowper-Coles, 2011). In assisting the application of a policing policy transfer, the Afghan state was clearly limited in its ability to provide an institutional infrastructure.

Historically Afghanistan has been seen as a dangerous, marginal country, variously subjected to the attentions of imperial powers, while the Afghan rulers had little ambition to develop a state infrastructure beyond the cities and the irrigated farming lands near Kabul (Hopkins, 2008). With limited expectations placed upon the Afghan state, it had little need to construct an ‘administrative steel cage’ of the type developed in the countries of South and South East Asia during the colonial era (Bayley & Harper, 2007). Given this history of weak or absent formal administrative infrastructure, a policy transfer premised on building an effective national intelligence management capacity, with attendant needs to maintain rules and records, is therefore inherently problematic. While the state might have been absent from rural Afghanistan, informal governance always existed at local level through a mixture of religious, tribal or family loyalty systems (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2012, 100-125). Few would claim such an arrangement is successful in terms of equity and consistency of treatment of the people and it might well also represent a considerable obstacle to nation building policy and the transfer of western policies and modes of governance (Monsutti, 2005). Afghanistan’s governance practices and institutions were therefore anticipated to result in contextual and application constraints.

While this study does not purport to examine the decision making or peak level stage of policy transfer, there is a need to pay heed to the structural complexities of policing policy transfers in Afghanistan. In an already complex mixture of capacity building programmes, two new sub-commands have been created within the past four years – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (NTM-A/CSTC-A) and the ISAF Joint Command (IJC), both of which have important responsibilities and capabilities with respect to development of the ANP. There are therefore multiple potential ‘exporters’ of policy. The range of actors involved in policy transfer is extensive with relationships to each other and the Afghan Government frequently difficult to comprehend. As noted earlier there have been a number of international or multilateral missions aimed at supporting policing in Afghanistan, with the USA being the most prominent player. There is a risk that a number of actors attempting to build ANP capacity without sufficient regard to each other, will create ‘a complex web of effort’ (Bayley & Perito, 2010). It has also been observed that there is an increasing use of private contractors operating in Afghanistan (House
Policy transfer will therefore also be dependent on effective contract network relationships. At one level then programmatic complexity is high, which Benson (2009) identifies as a key constraint on the success of policy transfers. The extent to which this would be recognised as a constraint by the mentors was of interest.

American efforts to professionalise the ANP over the course of a decade are detailed in a US Department of Defense report (Katzman, 2011). Since 2002, about $1.26 billion has been disbursed for Afghan police salaries from an international donors’ trust fund run by the UN Development Programme. Between 2005 and 2011 the US effort to train and equip the ANP amounted to $8.83 billion. Of this, total training costs amounted to over £1.84 billion (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2011, 45). It remains quite clear that the ANP continues to lag behind the Afghan National Army (ANA) in its readiness to assume its duties without outside help. While demand may be high, police development in Afghanistan was seen to be hindered by lack of application capacity for institutional reform, a related inability to eliminate widespread corruption, contextual resource constraints resulting in insufficient trainers and advisors, and a lack of unity of programmatic effort within the international community. Capacity building has also been hindered by a general lack of security, a government struggling to assert itself, a barely existent police force and justice system and poor levels of education (House of Lords European Union Committee, 2011). On a more positive note a recent US Department of Defense report gives particular attention to the formation of Police Mentoring Teams, in attempting to address what are deemed actionable problems (Inspector General US Department of Defense, 2011). The report suggests that earlier preoccupations with recruiting and assigning police personnel are of less concern now and the focus can shift to building a more professional personnel base with all newly recruited ANP to be trained before being assigned.

5. Transferring intelligence management principles and practice

A lengthy policy document sets out the principles which underpin Futures with the operational methodology based upon the experience and skills developed in counter-insurgency tactics used by law enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland. As such it represents a particularly well defined example of ‘policy for transfer’. Additionally Futures is being mentored by a group consisting entirely of former police officers with experience of intelligence management in Northern Ireland. This adds considerably to the programmatic cohesiveness of the exercise being undertaken in terms of the ability to ensure common understandings of the principles and practices subject to transfer. Futures represented a clear example of the process known as policy transfer. The lack of ambiguity was helpful in framing the investigation since the concept of policy transfer can be criticised on various grounds, for example James & Lodge (2003) cast doubt on the usefulness of the term when it is applied to policy responses in one country which are simply influenced by policies in another country, this they argue amounts to no more than evidence.
search. It is also possible to find numerous examples of policies in one country being opportunistically justified by the claimed success of a related policy in another country. In this study however, we examined a very detailed scheme for intelligence management, which has been codified and delivered according to a pre-specified mentoring programme by former police officers from the policy originating country. In short there was little doubt that an act closely resembling policy transfer as described in the literature was underway.

While there may be extensive policy histories associated with transferring policing principles and practice to developing countries and also intense policy making activity by coalition powers in relation to Afghanistan, the immediate precursor to the launch of the initiative we are examining in this paper can be traced to a particular incident. As observed by Stone (1999) it is frequently in circumstances of great pressure that policy transfers are initiated. Futures was no exception, following terror attacks in Kabul on 18 January 2010, during which an ANP intelligence capability was conspicuous by its absence, the US moved to support the ANP using mentoring programmes. Within weeks fact finding visits had started, and the first mentors arrived in April 2010. The ‘fact finding’ visit reported that the ANP had a hierarchical structure with distinct units performing specific tasks, suggesting a framework existed within which to work. This ‘snapshot’ which although useful lacked depth.

The re-building of the ANP intelligence capacity required outside help as a consequence of the US prohibition on teaching/sharing its intelligence methodologies (Bayley & Perito, 2010). A version of Futures had previously been delivered by RUC/PSNI Officers in Iraq, so their experience of working in a hostile environment, and, knowledge of a proven and successful intelligence system meant an attractive ‘off the shelf’ policy option was available. The mentors’ experience of working with the military in Northern Ireland was an additional bonus.

The Northern Ireland Troubles caused the development of informant and intelligence techniques that proved very successful in combating Irish Republican and Loyalist terrorism over 30 years. The success of the RUC model led the last RUC Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan to say publicly that the security forces were thwarting 4 out of 5 terrorist attacks. Futures aim is to provide a model accountability system and minimum standards to develop an effective police intelligence management system. This model was essentially a Counter Insurgency (COIN) response based on the rule of law, albeit with some key differences compared to a democratic state at peace.

With Futures two key elements are being transferred – system and tradecraft. The system provides a structured approach based on identification of threats, which when compared against what is known, generates an intelligence requirement. Whilst the formal elements of the system are in the public domain without the mentor’s experience and knowledge of tradecraft capacity building would not take place. Mentored tradecraft provides the skills to recruit and manage informants and to collect information to meet the identified intelligence requirement. In simple terms the transfer principle works thus – mentors describe the system and share their tradecraft, demonstrating how mentees can successfully apply the system.
The associated policies provide the ethical guidance and accountability consistent with human rights considerations and good governance principles. Futures provided information in Pashto and Dari (Afghanistan’s main languages) for use by ANP members. In addition, formal courses for members of the ANP were delivered in theatre by former police trainers from Northern Ireland with experience in counter insurgency and intelligence programs. Futures used performance metrics to track progress with mentoring initially focussed on delivery and later to assess the capability of the ANP mentees.

6. Methods

The study examines policy transfer in a single province in Afghanistan where the USA has taken the lead on assisting the Afghans with security. Empirical data is derived from interviews carried out with mentors working in the field during 2011-12. In total 10 out of a total of 14 mentors associated with Futures were interviewed by one of the authors (Boyd) who was in Afghanistan in the capacity of programme evaluator. Interviews were conducted on a face to face basis, nearly always in the locations where the mentors were working. Respondents were not tied down to narrow questions, instead being invited to take a ‘grand tour’ through the issues involved in policy transfer, guided by a few key pre-determined thematic destinations (Undheim, 2003). Such an approach it was felt best avoided the interviewer imposing pre-conceived ideas on the interview subjects. This was an important consideration given the need to extract a rounded interpretation of the issues understood by mentors to count in policy transfer. Interviews therefore ranged across a wide range of issues, but always addressed the viability of Futures in Afghanistan, cultural issues impacting on progress, contextual issues such as the availability of resources, physical and human geography of the province where the programme was being implemented and the institutional characteristics of the ANP. The key issues were chosen on the basis of a literature search on Afghanistan and policy transfer. Interview notes were written up immediately after. Transcripts have been analysed using standard narrative content analysis techniques, with emergent patterns used to explain the constraints experienced in relation to this particular case of policy transfer.

7. The programme in practice – initial observations on the ground

In general mentors were, in terms of local contextual information, ill prepared, frequently only knowing they would be based in a certain camp. Once on site they had to secure their own accommodation and locate a military escort to visit their work sites. It was a common practice for all mentors to ‘cold call’ at police stations to try and locate the unit they would work with and to make courtesy calls to local police commanders to build rapport and hopefully secure support. On the ground there was little evidence available to respondents that the relevant ANP senior commanders supported Futures thus importer demand needed to be developed by
the mentors’ bottom-up’. The circumstances demanded that mentors ‘translate’ Futures, encouraging adjustments to the intelligence management systems already in use where possible and mediating as opposed to directing adoption. While a complex interactive process was ongoing throughout the transfer, such application issues were not necessarily perceived as constraints. The majority of Futures mentors remained in place in excess of the usual 12 months contract and this additional time appears to have been a useful resource allowing policy germination to take place. This degree of permanence along with what mentors frequently described as a ‘relaxed’ or ‘collaborative’ approach in which they would advise and guide rather than dictate created what they regarded as good working relations with the ANP. A further aspect of the mentor – ANP relationship was based on a degree of reciprocity developed around safety. Security arrangements were in place to protect mentors at all times, however as a result of the strong relationship between mentor and mentees the latter took responsibility for adding supplementary measures whilst mentors were on site and by providing information on threats and dangers. In such a volatile environment rather surprisingly personal security was not a major concern for respondents and was not perceived as a contextual constraint on progress with Futures.

Resources both physical and organisational were a major contextual constraint. In brief many police stations damaged during the civil war haven’t been repaired; communication was based on cell phones, there was no internet, few computers and a shortage of vehicles, in short the policing infrastructure was barely functioning. Furthermore the ANP command and control structure was confused; corruption and lack of trust between the ethnic groups in the ANP was endemic and systemic with the informal power structure often over riding the formal organisational hierarchy. Confusion surrounded what the various police units actually did, for example, an intelligence unit that was believed to deal with crime and security threats in fact dealt solely with police corruption and land disputes.

If using the United Kingdom or the USA as benchmarks, it is fair to conclude that the ANP had a very limited understanding of intelligence work. For example it quickly became apparent to mentors that there was no existing effort made to identify and recruit sources who could report on the insurgency. Source monies were often misappropriated by senior officers and informants tended to be family and friends, there being no understanding of the necessity to protect the source. On occasion this failing had resulted in the death of the source and officer. Mentors invariably reported that the ANP intelligence system and organisational structure were significantly different to the profile provided in briefings, largely due to the Afghans ‘talking up’ their capability and the brevity of the fact finding visit.

8. Respondents’ observations on the policy transfer

As discussed above conversations with respondents ranged across a wide range of issues but were always directed to arrive at the following key destination points at some stage in the interview:
• The viability of Futures in Afghanistan
• Contextual issues such as the availability of resources physical and human geography
• Cultural issues impacting on progress
• Institutional characteristics of the ANP

For several reasons transferring a system for intelligence management developed in Northern Ireland to Afghanistan may not be viable. Northern Ireland, in spite of the level of political violence associated with The Troubles, did of course remain part of the United Kingdom, with most if not all of the institutions of government and society intact. Afghanistan on the other hand is a country which has in most respects, been on a course of destruction for the last 40 years. Respondents were therefore initially encouraged to provide their views on the viability of transferring intelligence systems to Afghanistan. A strong sense of the value of the mentoring programme came across in interviews, respondents identifying with a common purpose. This was manifested in the consistent view that intelligence management procedures and practice have characteristics which can be exported and that the Northern Ireland system was not unique or overly complex, so as to cause a programmatic constraint of the type outlined by Benson.

Humint tradecraft is simple; it needs the right person to work with sources. (S10)

It is not as structured here in Afghanistan, there are many customs and tribalism issues which means there is a greater need to research the information received to ensure that the Afghans aren't trying to settle personal grudges. But the basics are the same and while the INS (insurgents) methods are different they [mentees] try to get information to catch the INS and recover weapons and stop attacks so I suppose things don't change that much. (S5)

The basic elements of the Intelligence system are standard and will work in any context. For example, why a source becomes a source is because he feels a national identity (motivated by desire to serve his country), does it for the money, revenge etc. (S8)

All SB practices are easy it needs people to do the simple things. (S9)

More than one respondent felt it necessary to qualify their comments by making reference to the need to tailor methods to local capabilities, reflecting the translational nature of the programme:

Yes, but not the latest model. Afghanistan needs the 1995 model which was a manual paper based model due to the diverse levels of education and computer literacy among the ANP. (S1)
A sense of the Afghan programme providing mentors with professional validation came across in interview exchanges. This provided another indicator of the programmatic viability of Futures in Afghanistan:

... it is to disrupt the Taliban, seize caches and stop them. Success is dependent on good sources and to get good sources they need to be good intelligence officers – unless they are really lucky. (S5)

A number of respondents were prepared to make direct comparisons with their experiences in Northern Ireland during ‘The Troubles’. For example:

Thinking back to the early days in Northern Ireland product (procedure and practices) can be transferred anywhere. (S10)

Insurgents work in definite areas and the leaders are known. You can work to develop this knowledge and get to the point where they can do something. There are warlords in areas and the locals are loyal to them, much like South Armagh pockets are very supportive of the state and other pockets support the insurgents/terrorist. When I teach and mentor I point out who can help; how to speak to them; how to win them over, people will help once their role is clear and they are reassured on their safety. (S9)

Ideally mentors would have liked to have received much more training on the society they would be working in. This is a typical comment on the lack of contextual preparation offered:

... yes and possibly the culture the tribal issues and corruption would help. Knowing the INS structures and planning ability would help us to target training better. (S3)

As expected the geography of the country was a contextual factor which some respondents wished to discuss:

... Kabul is a city and it is easier to work and structure the system, but in the country it is difficult, people need to be on the ground first to find out the context and structure how they are going to introduce the changes. (S10)

My [mentees] have a good picture of the local security situation, who the leaders are; where the INS (insurgents) have been but they are outsiders (Uzbeks and Chechens) who come in from Pakistan and travel across the province in large groups staying a night here and there. They [mentees] do get information on where the INS have been, sometimes where they are but very rarely where they are going, because they are so mobile (living off the land) they are difficult to track which is different from home. But there were some similar situations in some areas in NI where the terrorists moved across the border making it difficult to track them. (S5)
I cover the inner city and rural areas, the city area has a massive transient population and the rural area is vast and there is only 3 officers to cover and they face issues such as lack of transport lack of radios are problems. (S9)

On the other hand there was on the whole less reference to the physical context of Afghanistan than had been expected. The slow speed of transport was noted as a problem, but was not regarded as decisive in the implementation story. This would not necessarily be true in other areas where the terrain is more extreme and information has to be passed over larger distances.

Finance and infrastructure were constant and significant contextual problems, causing mentors to improvise and was the subject of much discussion in interviews. For example, to compensate for the lack of money one mentor encouraged his mentees to reward their sources in kind by giving them wood a local valuable commodity.

Finance and transport are key and if they are available and the person is won over the practices we developed at home will apply and help the [mentees] to recruit and run sources. No sources in South Armagh worked for free. They [mentees] need money to pay sources and transport to travel to meet sources. (S9)

I think it would be more ‘scaled down’ because the country infrastructure and education is so poor. We have to cut the cloth accordingly, they don’t have the capability for information storage and information transfer, we need to go back to what we did in the 70’s and 80’s. (S8)

They need the support and direction from Headquarters and radios, source funds, vehicles and other equipment to go forward. It is very difficult to say you are doing your best when you don’t have the funds to buy a source a phone card! (S7)

Futures was designed to build an ANP intelligence management skill base, it was not funded to equip the infrastructure for intelligence management. The shortage of resources such as computers, other technology and securing appropriate funding generally are externalities beyond the scope of a programme such as Futures. As a consequence the experience with Futures indicates that the management of mentee expectations is an important issue to be negotiated by those delivering the programme. There was an expectation amongst the ANP that they should be as well-equipped as a Western police service if they are to be effective. This was not necessary according to mentors who believed they could show improvements were possible with only limited additional equipment required. As an example of why capacity building is highly dependent on personnel, it seemed clear that the mentors past experiences with paper based systems was invaluable in allowing them to demonstrate the system could work without computers.

While most respondents saw resource constraints as negotiable in time, one mentor provided a bleaker assessment of the situation.
Northern Ireland procedures are not suited for the locals here, they have no organisational structure or procedures to use, no phones (landlines), no cars – we are imposing a system from the top down imposing what we did and use in a country where the tools of the job don’t exist. (S10)

Constraint loosening by providing adequate finance and resources albeit highly significant would not, the evidence suggests be in itself sufficient to realise the success of the programme. Respondents were uniformly of the view that the starting position in Afghanistan was very poor in terms of intelligence management capabilities. A selection of extracts from transcripts gives an indication of the problems in transferring intelligence principles and practice into Afghanistan. Citing culture as the primary reason, respondents variously claimed Afghans failed to appreciate the importance of insurgents organizational systems, focussed on the immediate to the detriment of longer term strategic objectives, lacked appreciation of how intelligence information is managed, lacked ability to improvise solutions, had an overly fatalistic approach to events, lacked interest in cause and effect, and lacked an inclination to make accurate records of incidents.

It is clear that the Afghans are very slow to pick things up, they have very little knowledge of personalities (identity of the insurgents), the organisations (how they work operate and are resupplied) and the structure of the organisations they are dealing with. (S3)

They don’t protect sources as we did, it is a problem. It isn’t difficult to bring the concept across but you need to work to get them to appreciate the need for long term sources and to do this you need to protect them. They have a ‘fire brigade’ attitude and tend to rush out to capture the small picture rather than wait, they will react quickly and not wait until the incident develops to the point an intervention will have most impact. (S8)

Once on the ground it is difficult to get them to gather intelligence at the local level they don’t realise that information on the insurgents can be gathered at the local level; they know who the main leaders are and think you have to get information on them only. It is a concept they don’t have in their culture, we must realise the need is to train them from the top down as well as the bottom up, and get them to change their mind-set. (S7)

They can’t think outside the box, at home if we hit an obstacle we found a way around it, here the Afghan just walks away they don’t look for a way around it and nothing gets done so here when they do that they could lose the weapons or fail to stop an attack. (S3)

Any risks to the source are Inshallah (result of God’s will), if the police operation (based on source intelligence) goes wrong or the source is compromised God willed it– this reflects their approach to life and death. (S8)

... they don’t have the capacity to forecast and are not sophisticated enough to project the consequences of their actions, for example guards turned up on the first day to
guard a compound without guns how did they think they were going to do their job? Often they will leave a problem to someone else or wait for it to go away. (S1)

A big problem is attention to detail, they are very poor, for example report writing they miss large chunks of intelligence and other times they will fabricate stories around the truth. (S3)

The comments above could be described as classic ‘orientalist’ thinking, a term conceived in the context of post-colonial studies. Orientalism it is claimed, occurs when westerners assume eastern societies must move along a route that involves them becoming westernerised if they are to progress, and acting rationally is equated with copying western modes of thought. Identifying a lack of conformity with western practices and culture becomes the template for interpreting what is going in the eastern society under examination (Said, 1978). This would amount to an inability to see the Afghan point of view, or at least a disinclination to try and understand why the Afghan response may differ to the Western response to a problem or relationship. Orientalism might therefore explain why policy transfer is problematic, the mentors being unable to engage in the complex translational adjustments which the programme required in application. The evidence we collected suggests this is not the case. Nearly all the mentors moved at some point into much more sophisticated accounts of policy transfer issues which indicated they had been adaptive and able to learn about the Afghans and their attitude to policing. In short explanations went well beyond what could be dismissed as stereotyping or ‘orientalism’. Respondents were keen to discuss the means by which they had come to terms with the Afghan outlook on life and policing. In this respect the mentors appear to have been highly adaptive, seeing this as an integral part of their role. For example one respondent talked about how he had to work out ways of accommodating the ‘here and now’ pre-occupations expressed by the ANP officers he mentored. Another respondent wanted to stress the importance of showing respect to his ANP colleagues.

‘From my personal experiences in Iraq I knew Afghanistan and how to work in an Islamic and tribal country. I found similarities and contradictions, for example education standards in parts of Kabul are better than in parts of Iraq such as Tikrit. You have to make the best of it be patient and inventive. What we (Ulster people) do very well is we talk to people not at them like the Americans and some others who talk down to the Afghans. Part of our tradecraft is to treat people at their level and build relationships’. (S7)

Local manners’ sometimes meant ANP officers accepted what they were told and failed to question the source on his information. Interrogation might also be compromised by the cultural barriers preventing the officer asking intrusive questions such as enquiring about someone’s wife and female family members. Also to admit a lack of knowledge was tumult to a loss of face which was avoided by the mentees making up answers, whilst the reluctance to work across tribal boundaries hindered targeted source recruitment.
... bear in mind Afghans are tribal: family first, tribe and then national identity last. The tribal elders exert influence and this doesn’t suit a national security policy as local considerations come first. (S1)

The lesson for the Afghan is, don’t recruit your brother or uncle and if your brother, uncle, relative or anyone who knows you and your family is available to supply intelligence and are taskable to answer intelligence requirements, then get someone else to handle them who is unknown to them. (S2)

Issues related to status were also mentioned frequently in interviews.

The Afghan doesn’t want to lose face so they won’t admit a lack of knowledge, we need to give them confidence that it is OK to say ‘Don’t know’ and for them to recognise this then we can teach them to fill the gaps. (S7)

The extent to which language posed a further contextual constraint was much referred to. Adding to the expected complexities involved in running a police service there are two official languages – Pashto and Dari – and not all officers can speak both. There was also the problem of translation services to be negotiated in the mentoring process, since none of the mentors had fluency in either language there was a reliance on translators (Afghan ex-patriots) none of whom had any policing background. Over the course of the programme finer points had also been identified as problematic.

Their language tends to be passive they don’t use action words and some words don’t translate literally. (S1)

Afghanistan has been popularly described as a feudal society and there are certainly grounds for adopting this term to characterise certain aspects of the country. Afghanistan society is better described as comprising a highly personalized system marked in many respects by low degrees of institutionalization. Historically Afghanistan was never a colony of a modern nation state, although as a Soviet ‘satellite’, Afghanistan acquired some degree of modernity with respect to how its institutions were constructed. There was evidence of a ‘corporate’ memory of intelligence gathering and some remnants of accounting systems. Mostly though key elements of the typical bureaucratic construct used to deliver services in developed and developing countries are absent from contemporary Afghanistan, or where they exist, accorded less significance by police officers than ‘traditional’ or ‘personalised’ rules. For example a number of respondents discussed how police officers liked a ‘father figure’ (oldest person present) to make a decision, meaning younger senior officers will often defer to older junior officers. Clearly this makes for a difficult command and control system.

They don’t think in ‘straight lines’ (do not follow the reporting chain) and feel they must report to and show loyalty to the person who appointed them. (S1)
Another problem relates to the lack of meaning ascribed to positions of command if subordinates are not physically proximate. As one respondent concluded:

_Eastern Afghanistan is particularly active with groups of insurgents roaming the mountains ... The directors have a tendency to claim it is too dangerous to deploy to some areas with officers being retained at the PHQ [Provincial Headquarters], this happens so frequently to the point it seems systemic and may indicate an unwillingness by directors to be separated from their men and a perception of losing control if they are not near at hand or if they delegate responsibility to them._ (S8)

Superior officers seem to have a lack of faith in command which is not face to face. Clearly this disinclination to let officers out of immediate sight, places limits on the potential to develop intelligence gathering systems. ANP officers are, according to respondents, unwilling to recognise their position in a chain of command and how their actions at one level impact on actions elsewhere.

_They don't understand they are a link in the chain and if they don't do the right thing it causes problems for someone else further down the line._ (S10)

A general tendency on the part of ANP officers to avoid thinking long term was noted by every respondent. This is probably another manifestation of institutional behaviour that is formed in the absence of a bureaucratic approach to accounting for current actions and how they relate to future events. Nearly every conversation with mentors at some point covered the problem encountered with the institutionalised ANP aversion to ‘admin and writing reports’. Record keeping is of course one of the defining features in modern institutional life.

_They don't like the paperwork, record keeping and contact notes, we teach them higher standards than they need – RIPA (Regulatory Investigative Powers Act 2000) which gave us contact notes. In Iraq they stopped doing contact notes because they didn't have the paper and saw no value in making them. The Afghans do the contact notes but would like to do away with them and they don't recognise and understand the difference between the contact notes and the intelligence reports._ (S7)

_A big problem is attention to detail they are very poor, for example report writing they miss large chunks of intelligence and other times they will fabricate stories around the truth. A big thing here is poor literacy, they need to document the intelligence, write their reports accurately and keep records and they find it difficult to do this. They can't understand the importance of writing things down, that by writing things down keeps the accuracy of the intelligence when it is transmitted to Kabul._ (S3)

The need to pursue institution building was anticipated but not on quite the scale that became apparent through research. A massive _application_ challenge is implied by the evidence collected from respondents. Corruption predictably featured heavily in many of the discussions with mentors.
Teamwork is difficult because posts are allocated by nepotism by a senior officer who appoints someone he likes, thus the quality of officer competence varies enormously. (S1)

The current system is open to infiltration corruption and disruption for example you pay someone at Headquarters you can get any job an example is a guy here paid 25000 Afghani (approx. $500) to move to a post he wanted. (S10)

In practice corruption was corrosive to the programme, particularly when an incompetent commander was appointed either as the result of nepotism or by ‘buying’ the position. This commander would challenge the mentor by refusing to work with him (possibly because he didn’t want to reveal his lack of knowledge hence losing face) or ordering his officers not to follow the advice of the mentor to mask his incompetence. This would often frustrate the junior officers who valued the mentor’s advice. Fortunately many mentees maintained contact with mentors without the knowledge of the Director. Another example is the misappropriation of source funds, for instance senior officers receiving source rewards would keep part or all of the monies telling the ‘handlers’ that the application had been refused or reduced. This undermined one of the tenets of the program and efforts to keep and recruit productive sources of intelligence. As sources were regularly underpaid or not paid at all, the source would often ‘sell’ the information to the highest bidder. Both cases inhibited uptake of the programme because the ANP commanders resisted adoption of the policy and the misappropriation of source rewards removed the resources required to underpin the policy. Corruption is a very significant contextual constraint on effective policy transfer in the case examined.

9. Conclusions

The data analysis has been framed in the terms provided by Benson (2009) as a means of identifying constraints commonly encountered in policy transfer. The current study was focused on one particular stage of a policy transfer, the ‘handover’. This article did not examine support for Futures at elite central leadership levels in the ANP. Instead it focused on the mentors-mentee interface and interviews did not identify a lack of demand as a particular constraint. Much of what we were told about interactions with ANP mentees would suggest the mentors were in a position to build up interest in the Futures programme over the lengthy period they were in the field. The programmatic character of Futures – its uniqueness and complexity – did not compromise transfer to the ANP according to interview subjects. The mentors were a cohesive group with similar experiences of intelligence management to bring to the programme, which it is concluded gave them a strong base for explaining Futures to ANP officers. The main constraints and challenges facing Futures were we believe located in the areas of transfer Benson (2009) termed contextual and application.

In summing up the comments made by interview respondents it is perhaps surprising to report that the main contextual obstacles were perceived to lie not
in the weak identification with liberal democracy encountered, nor in the difficult physical geography and not even in the high levels of political violence experienced. Instead the lack of an effective bureaucracy to support policing and Afghanistan’s complex cultural make up received more attention. Bureaucracy is the thread that binds modern societies together and intelligence work relies on records and protocols more than most elements of policing. The lack of a record keeping mentality impacted heavily on efforts to embed Futures. Rashid’s (2008) contemporary observations on the Afghan state note how President Karzai’s office showed few instincts to build up bureaucratic institutions and this he concluded had much to do with several disillusioned ‘returnees’ leaving government. The absence of bureaucratic institutions and associated behavioural norms at operational levels, suggests, in Gray’s (2003) terminology that Afghanistan may be more ‘state resistant’ than a ‘failed state’. In policy transfers between developed countries, the high institutional density of the importing jurisdiction is predicted to emerge as a constraint in the policy transfer literature (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). In Afghanistan it is very low institutional density which presents the challenge. This represents a major challenge to institution building and is the main application constraint facing Futures. The lack of knowledge available to western powers concerning the nature of Afghan society is certainly a striking feature of the intervention. Marsden’s (2009) account of aid, army and empires suggests this lack of preparedness has featured in western powers engagement in Afghanistan throughout history. We should be reminded yet again of Page’s (2000) warning of the need to understand the importing jurisdiction. The cultural norms, power relations and loyalties holding sway in Afghan society featured heavily in subjects accounts of the Futures programme. Also the evidence suggests that mentor understanding of the infrastructure of the target organisation and the capabilities of its staff and the wider policing community were important for successful transfer. As Marenin (2000) puts it ‘implementers are the crucial link between programmes and the police on the ground’.

The relatively small pool of experienced mentors available to operate in Afghanistan will limit the scale and pace of intelligence management policy transfer. There is a strong sense of mentors having individually secured a working knowledge of Afghan culture. It is essential that this knowledge is in some way archived for future capacity building interventions in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Mentored policy transfer programmes had usually relied on police personnel drawn from stable and established police organisations for relatively brief periods ‘in mission’. However in the last decade there has been an increasing use of former police officers working as privately contracted mentors (Marenin, 2000; den Heyer, 2012). The status of the private contractor is significant as police services in the west are unwilling or find it difficult to second officers to a mentoring role for an extended period of time, yet this is almost certainly what the application process demands. In the case examined, the privately hired mentors were in post for years rather than months, providing a real opportunity to observe how ANP officers reacted in professional development terms in relation to intelligence management supporting knowledge, skills and codes of conduct.
The issue of how change could be reliably attributed to *Futures* is a very challenging evaluation problem in its own right, with mentees suspicious of anything they construed as measuring their performance. A summative and independent assessment of *Futures* has not been attempted and for practical (security situation), technical reasons and the need to heed political sensitivities, this is likely to remain the case in the immediate future. It is also important to avoid conceiving policy transfer in terms of achieving pre-specified outcomes. Consistent with the arguments found in the policy translation literature, the case examined provides an example of policy adaptation. Mentored indigenisation rather than replication best describes the longer term process at work.

A qualitative case study of the type conducted does provide a stronger understanding of the key drivers in the handover phase of the policy transfer. Of high importance is a capacity on the part of the mentors to bond with their ANP counterparts, and ability to convince ANP officers that the mentored system was successfully tried and tested. Delivery by credible mentors who remain in place for a protracted period and a demonstrable willingness to improvise on the part of mentors and work with existing organisational structures are also of great significance. The lesson drawn from this study in so far as it provided for formative evaluation is that policy transfer will not be successful if inter-personal translational elements are not given the same degree of attention as pre-engineered ‘hard’ systems.

**Bibliography**


