

Pathways to Understanding Community-Oriented Policing in Post-Conflict Societies

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide a brief outline of an ongoing research project that is funded by the EU for a period of 5 years. The project titled 'Community-Based Policing and Post-Conflict Police Reform' will address different aspects of Community-Oriented policing and police reform in post-conflict societies. Community-based policing holds promise but also entails challenges. A clear ambition for the project is to identify both differences and commonalities in community-oriented policing in post-conflict societies. Human security will form an important backdrop for understanding key issues like post-conflict violence, peacebuilding SSR and COP. In this paper we point to some dilemmas and perspectives regarding SSR, COP, post-conflict and human security. In addition the paper provides an overview of the role of the Policing Experts Network as project advisors and evaluators for mapped community-oriented policing training and education material.

Keywords:

Post-conflict, community-oriented policing, human security, SSR, police training and education

Introduction

Police reform in post-conflict societies has been receiving significant attention in recent years. Global threats (terrorism, drug and trafficking networks, etc.) often originate in conflict and post-conflict contexts where maintaining law and order is extremely challenging. The international community and the EU spend billions supporting police reform processes in post-conflict contexts (Bloching, 2011). However, increased use of resources and effort has so far failed to result in effective policing and trust-building in these societies. For example, in post-conflict societies, emphasis is usually placed on the police fighting

insurgency rather than crime; widespread corruption, abuse of police powers and lack of professionalism are some of the other factors that impede a well-functioning civilian police. A well-functioning national police force that is able to uphold the rule of law is crucial to state building. The rule of law is an important bastion of police reform in countries undergoing transition from conflict to post-conflict status (Mani, 1999). An all-inclusive approach to police reform is therefore essential to restore trust-based relations between police and the community in post-conflict societies (Bayley, 2001). Community-oriented policing (COP) is widely acknowledged to be an important policing model that can greatly enhance better cooperation and trust between the police and the community (Alderson, 1977, 1979, Bennett, 1994 and Greene, 2000).

Aims of the research

This joint research project seeks to provide solid empirical knowledge and analysis by conducting a comparative study of the causes and implications of security or insecurity in post-conflict societies. The project will be a unique study of community-oriented policing (COP) practices and experiences that captures both successes and failures, and compares them. Our comparative analysis will shed light on existing COP practices in South Asia (Afghanistan and Pakistan), Africa (Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan), Central America (Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador), and south-eastern Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo). The selection is based on these countries' relevance in relation to the EU and international organisations' engagement in police reform.

It aims to reflect both success stories and worst-case scenarios. The underlying assumption is that key analytical, process-oriented lessons can be learnt both from what works and from what definitely does not work. Integrating security discussions into development discussions through the concept of human security gives us a good opportunity to study COP practices in post-conflict contexts.

One of the main aims of the research is to generate knowledge about human security at the local level. In our opinion, those best positioned to understand the interplay between security and development challenges are the community of women, children and men. In most post-conflict societies, issues of personal security and livelihood security are quite often intimately intertwined, and there will therefore be a need to understand how local communities cope with issues of human security, and how state institutions like the police can contribute to rather than threaten human security. As Marenin rightly points out, '... the fundamental problem and goal for the state, the police, and civic society remains security, which is broadly conceived as less crime and more social order, more physical and mental safety, and confidence by the people that they will be able to live and work knowing that they and their way of life will be protected' (Marenin, 2009: viii).

A unique feature of the research project is the presence of a Police Experts Network (PEN) comprising policing experts and professionals with extensive institutional and mission experience, whose role will be to support research planning and the dissemination of research findings on police practice. The findings from the research process will help to facilitate COP curricula, education and training in the case countries.

Challenges and dilemmas of police reform

It was not until the late 1990s and early 2000s that police reform gained increasing attention from policymakers and international reform actors as an important part of international assistance for capacity building in post-conflict societies. Despite this, however, research on police reform has remained sparse as an independent academic field of study (Zielger and Nield, 2001). There are several reasons for this lack of interest.

- Firstly, police reform and security sector reform (SSR) are used interchangeably as identical concepts in post-conflict security discourses. Policymakers recognised SSR as a much broader concept in security matters in international assistance and state-building interventions. As the DCAF Report points out, there is ‘... little growth in knowledge about policing within the police community concerned with neither SSR, nor an increased sense of how the police matter in SSR and how policing affects the human security of a population’ (Marenin, 2005: 29).
- Secondly, much of the SSR approach has primarily focused on a militarised security discourse, thereby undermining the importance of police reform efforts in post-conflict societies. Eide and Holm clearly describe this dilemma when they mention: ‘... the overly military focus of traditional international relations research on the one hand and, on the other, the more alternative approaches of the peace research community, which has tended to reject the importance of effective state power’ (Eide and Holm, 2000: 02). In other words, the law and order role of the police has received much less attention, despite its potential for dealing with day-to-day law and order issues that affect the community. As Tonita Murray points out, ‘... there is considerable knowledge and experience available to adapt to police organisations in post-conflict societies, but such accumulated knowledge and experience is not being tapped into’ (Murray, 2007: 118).
- Thirdly, some researchers have pointed to the western-centric approach to SSR, where the focus is on western-style models of reform and policing (Brogden, 2005). Bayley argues that international police reform focuses on issues that are beneficial to donor countries rather than recipient countries (Bayley, 2005). Despite these dilemmas and challenges, sustainable development and building of peace and stability depends on the trust established between police and the people, as much as it depends on institutional police reform. This is where community-oriented policing becomes relevant.

The role of the police is crucial in post-conflict situations, especially in the transition from military to civilian-based security. However, this role is not very often clear. In these situations, tensions often arise between those advocating 'hard' security, such as combating well-armed and organised insurgents, and those concerned with law and order issues in and between communities on a day-to-day basis (Mani, 1999, Ferguson, 2004, Pinot and Wiatrowski, 2006). There is therefore a need for a police service that can both deal with armed insurgents and with day-to-day law and order issues in communities. However, the reform seems to lack mechanisms for interacting with communities, learning more about their particular security needs and finding ways to work together to address them. The best way of doing this in such diverse, volatile environments cannot be decided at policy level, however, but rather at the local level together with those whose lives are actually at stake. The importance of policing in post-conflict societies is clearly identified by Marenin: 'People want and need jobs and deserve employment, but they also need protection against normal criminals and organised violence. The issue of what to address first in post-conflict construction has no obvious answer, except to say that local civic society needs to have a strong voice in determining priorities and the sequencing of reconstruction projects, and that civic society and the state have both soft and hard security needs' (Marenin, 2005:10). Without community involvement and support, police reform efforts have little chance of succeeding.

Scope of Community-Oriented Policing in Post-Conflict Societies

One of the crucial questions that arise in post-conflict contexts is how to improve relations between law enforcement agencies and citizens, especially when the latter have been the victims of violence and corrupt behaviour perpetrated by the law enforcement agencies themselves. Trust between police and communities are extremely weak. That is why a civilian police service is clearly important as part of the state-building effort in post-conflict societies. The creation of a strong and successful police service and its ability to impose the rule of law is of fundamental importance to overall human security (Mani, 1999). This is where COP can re-establish broken links between communities and police, establish them where they may never have existed, or renegotiate them where they were poor in the past. However, this transition is not an easy one, because, in many post-conflict societies, the police themselves are viewed as a cause of insecurity, due to violent and abusive behaviour, corruption and their inability to deal with local law and order issues. Despite these challenges, COP as a policing model holds much promise in restoring and building trust in police/community relations.

Like the concept of human security, there is also wide variation in the definitions and interpretations of COP used by different actors, thereby raising questions about its utility at the operational level. In our project, we aim to capture the diversity of COP perspectives by looking at it from two angles: the top-down angle, which includes government poli-

cies and efforts, and police perspectives from the national, regional and local levels; and the bottom-up angle, which includes how COP is perceived by different communities of women, youth, men and minorities. The role of NGOs and civil society in general will also form an important part of our research.

Post-conflict

At first glance, the term 'post-conflict' can seem to be a misnomer, especially if we look at the countries that are involved in our research project. It can be argued that countries like Afghanistan, Somalia and South Sudan can hardly be classified as 'post-conflict' given the persistent violent conflicts that feature in the news almost every day. However, while conflicts can be devastating, they also vary within each region or country. For example, some areas in a country will experience relative calm and peace with very little violence, while other areas of the same country will experience violent conflicts in the form of insurgencies, conflicts about resources or a general lack of law and order.

Afghanistan is a good example of this variation. For example, parts of the country are experiencing heavy conflict as a result of local and cross-border insurgencies by the Taliban and ISIS, while other parts of the country are relatively calm. Our fieldwork in Nimruz bears testimony to this. It is a region where there is relative peace and calm with very little insurgency or violent threats to the local population.

Therefore, for the purpose of our research project 'Community-Based Policing and Post-Conflict Police Reform' project proposal 2014, (Acronym ICT4COP) ⁽¹²⁾, 'post-conflict country' primarily refers to countries where there have been high levels of violence and some degree of intervention, either in the form of national or international military or police missions, and that are undergoing some form of recovery and reform process (ICT4COP, 2014: 13).

Human Security as a conceptual framework

An interesting perspective in our project is linking security and development through the concept of human security. It links them by placing the security of populations, as opposed to the security of states, at the centre of the security debate. Whether the government is present or not, local populations must constantly negotiate the terms of their security or insecurity with whomever is in power in order to reconstruct their lives.

The concept of Human security (UNDP, 1994) originated in 1994 with the Human Development Report on aid and security discourses. Human security focuses on two main areas:

⁽¹²⁾ ICT4COP: This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under grant agreement No 653909.

‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’. It focuses on broader aspects of security, (economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security) and on the different forms of interlinked insecurity people experience (Alkire, 2002). The concept recognises violence and poverty as major threats that are somehow related, although in ways that may not be immediately apparent. In its broadest sense, the term focuses on human vulnerability, encompassing threats of all kinds (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007). At the policy level, there has been an ongoing debate about what this broad and all-inclusive concept means in relation to existing security and development policy, and whether it can lead to a meaningful shift in how international actors approach their engagement in post-conflict and fragile environments (MacFarlane and Kong 2006, Mack, 2002). Advocates of the concept point to its strength in bridging the gap between security, violent conflicts and development agendas, while critics point to its ambiguous and multi-interpretative nature and question its usefulness at a practical level (Paris, 2001, Gasper 2010).

As there is no common consensus on the definition itself, many countries have approached it in different ways. For example, the Canadians have used the concept to humanise their security agenda by concentrating on key issues like poverty alleviation, strengthening governance and accountability, human rights and social justice in their peace operation missions (Axworthy, 1999), while the Japanese take a broader view of human security, their emphasis being on its humanitarian aspect. They have set up a Human Security Trust Fund to provide funds that can be used operationally on the ground to assist community development projects in fields such as education, health, agriculture, landmine removal, etc. (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2006, Glasius, 2008). Nonetheless, whatever the focus, the question remains how the relationship between conflicts, violence and poverty can best be understood in post-conflict societies, and how this can be addressed in a more integrated way by actors at the local level. In the report *Security Now: Protecting and Empowering People*, the Commission on Human Security (2003) points to the involvement of a plethora of actors, such as NGOs, regional organisations and civil society, in managing human security, and stresses that empowering people is an important factor in human security and that state and human security are dependent on each other. As the report tellingly points out, ‘Without human security, state security cannot be attained and vice versa. Human security requires strong and stable institutions. Whereas state security is focused, human security is broad’ (Commission on Human Security, 2003:6). An accountable national police is a prerequisite for good state-building.

Police Experts Network

A common complaint running through different police reform missions is the challenge of capacity and competence building in a long-term perspective. Police reform and capacity building in conflict and post-conflict societies takes time. As A. Rathmell mentions in the case of Iraq; ‘...programmatic delays combined with the very short time horizons

hampered the implementation of the capacity building, reform, and institutional-building programmes' (Rathmell, A. et al., 2005: xi). One of the ideas behind the establishment of and inclusion of the Police Experts Network (PEN) in ICT4COP was to create a forum that could bring together academia and practitioners on the ground (i.e. individuals with police experience). The Police Experts Network is coordinated by the Norwegian Police University College (PHS), and aims to mobilise a range of police experts and professionals linked to police institutions, NGOs, IGOs and police missions who can directly integrate and apply research findings in training/education programmes in post-conflict countries. Our project-based Police Experts Network includes policing experts and police professionals with responsibilities in key European and international institutions/organisations/missions and from case countries. For each case country, a network of police experts and research actors will be formed to interact during the entire research process.

As of February 2017, 56 individuals (13 female) representing 20+ different nationalities are registered as Police Experts Network members, 35+ with a policing background.

One of the main tasks will be to engage members in discussions on community-oriented policing in post-conflict settings. Training and education materials collected from focus countries (where the project will directly study police–community relations) and from selected European countries and international organisations where COP training and education is provided will be mapped in order to identify and disseminate 'best practices' and 'lessons learned'. PEN will also be activated to assist with other work packages under the ICT4COP project on developing Community-Oriented Policing Handbooks.

For the research project, the Norwegian Police University College has created an electronic database platform for 'COP training and education'. The database is only accessible to PEN-members and researchers involved in the ICT4COP-project. It will include information on:

- Owners and authors: who owns the material, what are the intellectual property considerations and who is responsible for its development/maintenance, contact person.
- Is the course only available for training law enforcement personnel or can a wider audience (NGOs, etc.) be given access to and the right to use the material.
- Is it a basic, intermediate or advanced course/training?
- Are the courses accredited and are ECTS credits obtained after successful exams.
- Delivery method: i.e. self-learning, online learning, classroom-based or a combination.
- Technical requirements for successful delivery of the course.
- Assessment: is the course assessed, and if so how?

In addition to the abovementioned mapping questions, several additional questions have also been included that are relevant to the research project.

- Who are the actors involved in COP training and education?
- Who were/are the actors involved in the development of strategies for COP training and education?
- What are the links between national governments and COP training and education strategies?
- Who attends the community-oriented policing training that is mapped?
- Are there cultural differences in the interpretation of the notion 'community-based/oriented policing'?
- Are there different approaches to and understandings of the notion 'community-based policing' in the mapped material?

The ICT4COP timeframe is 5 years ending in June 2020. The advantages of connecting practitioners and researchers are twofold. Firstly, the researchers find that contact with police officers with 'boots on the ground' has distinct value. Secondly, the members of the Police Experts Network will be in a better position to interpret the mapped training material from a practitioner's point of view, as intended. For example, the need to delineate the research efforts became obvious in the case of Pakistan, a federal country with a huge variety of different, independent police agencies/forces and education institutions. In one region, namely Punjab, almost 10 different basic and advanced police education institutions have been identified, and the same applies to other regions in Pakistan. National knowledge at the local level about the organisation and structure of the police has proven to be of great value when mapping training material.

In the latter phase of the project, handbooks and other material will be made available to the EU and other international institutions educating and training police personnel serving on police reform missions. The PEN members will also be engaged in the development of elearning modules in Community-Oriented Policing in close cooperation with Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany. By involving these police professionals, the project aims to influence the way COP is understood and practiced by institutions/countries that contribute to policy, training and education through the EU and international organisations. It will also create a forum promoting reflection and a better understanding of the differences between the institutions that provide police personnel and host country institutions as regards their understanding and practicing of community-oriented policing. Continuity is an important factor for a successful police education and training in post-conflict societies. One of the biggest challenges in police development programmes as pointed out by Albrecht and Jackson is 'how to retain and pass on institutional memory remains a real issue' (Albrecht, P. and Jackson, P., 2009: 173). This is where PEN will be an important bridge

between the research process and the application of the findings in COP education and training curricula both in Europe and case countries.

Moving Forward

The study approach will be explorative and qualitative. Our research will be conducted in all case countries in close collaboration with the experts in our Police Expert Network and ICT partners. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group meetings, case histories and key informants. Participants will include communities of women, men, youth, ethnic groups and other groups that may be relevant in the particular context, from both the city and village level in all case countries. Data will also be collected from government and non-government institutions, civil society, the police establishment and other authorities that will be relevant to our project. In short, our data will comprise state-centric and people-centric perspectives on the issues of COP and human security.

Of course, individuals' perspectives and experience are crucial to our understanding. They can lead to new and different ways of looking at and understanding the issues at hand. However, while it must be remembered that narratives are not static and will always contain contested elements, they nonetheless help researchers, practitioners, communities of women and men and policymakers to understand how individuals locate and experience their social world (Hopkins, 2004, Spalek, Awa El and Macdonald, 2008).

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