

**Institution:** The Open University

**Unit of Assessment:** D30 History

**Title of case study:** Developing the UK's international policing capabilities

### 1. Summary of the impact

Research into the history of British policing overseas, conducted at the Open University's *International Centre for the History of Crime, Policing and Justice*, resulted in Dr **Georgina Sinclair** acting as academic advisor to the Association of Chief Police Officers (International Affairs), the International Policing Assistance Board, and the Ministry of Defence Police.

As a result of the transfer of historical research findings and methodological expertise, the various agencies deploying police officers overseas now coordinate more effectively via an improved communications and media strategy. In addition a new set of principles and guidance for overseas deployments has been developed, with **Sinclair** serving as the sole academic member of the working group preparing this document.

### 2. Underpinning research

**Sinclair**, **Emsley** and **Williams** are historians working within the *International Centre for the History of Crime, Policing and Justice*, a group at the forefront of research into nineteenth and twentieth-century British policing. Via a programme of archival research and hundreds of interviews with ex-colonial police officers, this group (and **Sinclair** in particular) provided the first comprehensive study of the colonial police and their complex role within Britain's turbulent process of decolonisation during the twentieth century. **Sinclair** demonstrated that, contrary to popular myth within the police services, it was coercion rather than consent that was most commonly associated with colonial policing during this period [3.1]. The application of an oral history methodology, innovative in this field, served to link academic theories of policing to analyses of operational practice.

Further work (with **Williams**) on the influential role within the Empire of models of policing developed in Ireland led to the evolution of a theory of 'capacity transfer' whereby policing practices transferred overseas (and further developed) were then reintegrated within a domestic context at a later stage [3.2]. Thus, far from a discrete and marginal activity to the metropole, the research proved that the transfer of police expertise and personnel around the Empire had a significant impact on police practice within the UK.

**Sinclair** then began research designed to investigate the impact of this historical development upon the evolution of later twentieth-century UK policing 'styles' and their international application. Linking the historical theory of 'capacity transfer' with a programme of contemporary oral history, she was security-cleared by the UK police to conduct fieldwork and interviews with officers during the period 2010–12 in Kosovo (2010), Bosnia (2011), and Australia (2011–12). The bulk of this

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

research was accomplished during an ESRC-funded project 'Exploring UK policing practices as a blueprint for democratic police reform' (undertaken jointly with **Emsley**).

This project mapped the institutional framework for the provision of overseas policing services across government and police forces in the UK and highlighted the long-term lack of an official government/police policy with regard to such deployments. It also highlighted the extent to which the skills of UK officers had been reshaped by overseas missions and the consequent impact on local and domestic policing issues on their return.

The research further demonstrated the international importance of the UK police brand by highlighting its esteem with overseas police forces and governments and the need to maintain its reputation [3.6]. Interviews with past and present police practitioners were used to draw the attention of police organisations to the need to build corporate memory and share policing 'best practice', both locally and internationally.

Using the historical data from prior research as a baseline comparator, 'Exploring UK policing practices' thus argued that historical overseas deployment had significantly influenced the current and developing notion of a UK policing 'brand' but that UK police and government organisations needed to do more to coordinate and maximise the benefits from this activity.

Researchers involved: Clive **Emsley**, Professor of History, Open University to date; Chris A. **Williams**, Senior Lecturer in History, Open University to date; Georgina **Sinclair**, Research Fellow in History, Open University, 2008 to date.

**3. References to the research**

1. Sinclair, G. and Williams, C. (2007) 'Home and Away: The Cross-Fertilisation between "Colonial" and "British" Policing, 1921–85', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 35, pp. 221–238.
2. Sinclair, G. (2009) 'The "Irish" Policeman and the Empire: Influencing the Policing of the British Empire-Commonwealth', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxvii, no. 142, pp. 173–187.
3. Sinclair, G. (2009) 'Hong Kong Headaches, Policing the 1967 Disturbances' in Bickers, R. and Yep, R. (eds) *Hong Kong 1967*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, pp. 89–105.
4. Sinclair, G. (2011) 'Globalising British Policing', in Emsley, C. (ed.) *The History of Policing*, vol. IV, Ashgate.
5. Sinclair, G. (2011) 'The Sharp End of the Intelligence Machine: The Rise of the Malayan Police Special Branch 1948–1955', *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 460–477.
6. Sinclair, G. (2012) 'Exporting the UK Police Brand: The RUC-PSNI and the International Agenda', *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 44–66.

**Research funding**

'Exploring UK policing practices as a blueprint for democratic police reform: the overseas deployment of UK Police Officers, 1989–2009', ESRC Standard Grant, 1 April 2010 – 30 November 2011 (RES-000-22-3922) c. £150,000. (Final report grading: 'very good'.)

'Policing the British Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries', seminar funding from Groupe Européen de Recherches sur les Normativités (GERN) and Santander, £1926, 2009.

#### 4. Details of the impact

The research of members of the *International Centre for Crime, Policing and Justice*, and particularly **Sinclair**, into UK police deployments overseas since 1945 has had significant impact on the ongoing work of various UK agencies involved in overseas policing. **Sinclair's** expertise and advice have been sought frequently, and this has helped to focus collaboration and planning among these agencies. In addition, **Sinclair's** research findings, which link academic theory with operational practice, have had a significant impact on the development of overseas policing strategy at national level and have enhanced expertise among UK officers deploying abroad.

As a result of the research as outlined in (2) above, and the contacts made while conducting that research, **Sinclair** has since 2010 advised a range of policing bodies, including the *Association of Chief Police Officers International Affairs (ACPO IA)*, the *Ministry of Defence Police (MDP)* and members of the *International Policing Assistance Board (IPAB)*.

Initial briefings requested by Chief Constable Colin Port (ACPO portfolio holder for International Affairs, 2009–13) on the ways in which historically-based research could inform international policing undertaken by UK forces led to **Sinclair's** appointment as the sole academic adviser to ACPO IA and IPAB. Following her assessment of the fragmented delivery mechanisms for overseas policing across UK government departments and police, a decision was reached by ACPO IA to develop a new information and media strategy. **Sinclair** then worked extensively with ACPO IA (e.g. 27 meetings between May 2010 and November 2011) to develop a dedicated website housing open-source documents and all 'need-to-know' information for UK police officers interested in an overseas deployment [5.1]. The positive reception of this initiative on the part of UK officers in turn led to an invitation for **Sinclair** to serve as editor for a newly-created ACPO IA newsletter, circulated to all UK police forces and appropriate government departments, and designed to disseminate information about overseas deployments for the benefit of serving officers [5.2].

Following the success of this new communications strategy, **Sinclair** was asked to contribute to high-level discussions of future policy at, *inter alia*, the Association of Chief Police Officers 2011 conference. She also represented the UK at a range of police-practitioner forums internationally (USA, 2011; Australia, 2010, 2012; Hong Kong, 2010, 2012). Following her appointment in 2011 as the only academic member of the International Police Assistance Board (IPAB), a senior cross-governmental and policing body which promotes the coordination of international policing referrals, she again intervened in a range of policy discussions. For example, she accompanied Colin Port to discuss the provision of UK police in the Middle East and Georgia with the Home Affairs Select Committee (November 2011).

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

Her work contributed directly to raising awareness within government of the importance of international policing assistance. In 2012, the ACPO IA lead was appointed (for the first time) to the Building Stability Overseas Board (a cross-governmental committee concerned with stabilising fragile and conflict-affected states), and Sinclair worked with Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff and Colin Port to prepare a brief for presentation to the National Security Council. While not yet submitted, this activity shows the extent to which Sinclair's research has gained traction at the highest levels of government and will continue to generate impact in the future.

The impact of the research was not confined to improving communication between the various agencies and raising awareness of the UK's international policing activities among members of the UK government and the military. As an IPAB member with security clearance, Sinclair has been actively involved in work designed to generate enhanced capability in officers deploying overseas. For example, the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) has drawn on her research findings which demonstrated both the need for and the value of developing an institutional memory of overseas engagements.

Previously, little or no information was retained centrally from overseas deployments but as a result of her guidance there has been a drive within MDP to collect and coordinate material relating to international deployments that have taken place in the past, and to harness the overseas experiences of MDP officers to produce training material used for future pre-deployment. She has also made a distinctive contribution to *Policing the context: principles and guidance to inform international policing assistance*, a manual of best practice currently being drafted by the Stability Unit, which will replace the single 2007 *Peace Support Operations Manual* (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

Thus, assisted by a combination of Open University and RCUK funding **Sinclair**, in conjunction with **Emsley** and **Williams**, has demonstrated the way in which historical research into policing can have contemporary utility. The theories and expertise generated by an extensive programme of research were drawn on by a range of police organisations, assisting them both in understanding their need for change and in achieving that change.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact****Public/Published sources**

1. *ACPO IA Newsletter*. Autumn 2011, Summer 2012
2. 'International Police Assistance: Globalising UK Policing Practices', *Policing UK 2013: Priorities and Pressures: a year of transformation* (London: Witan Publishing, 2013)

**Police Sources**

3. Former Chief Constable Somerset and Avon Police, Former ACPO IA lead
4. Acting Chief Constable, Ministry of Defence Police
5. International Police Assistance Board Annual Reports 2010, 2011, 2012
6. Letter from Ministry of Defence Police (1/11/2013)