



# Policing Reforms in the Aftermath of Conflict

Justice and Security Sector Reform Lessons From Northern Ireland for Peacebuilding and Countering Violent Extremism - A Practitioner's Perspective

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This policy brief offers a practitioner's perspective on how police-community relations eventually were moved from a place of distrust in certain sections of society to one of wider acceptance and partnership with improved long-term gains against violent extremism. It highlights how implementing a comprehensive community policing strategy can serve as a means and an end in itself when dealing with drivers of intercommunal violence and violent extremism.

These views are based on lessons learned from my time served in military and police ranks from the early 1970s through to the mid-2000s. I joined Northern Ireland's national police service, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), in 1978 during a period when the police had taken over primacy from the military for dealing with the civil unrest, sectarian violence, and conflict locally termed as "The Troubles," which had claimed more than 3,000 lives. By 1999, following the signing of a peace agreement and a major review of policing, I

became program director for the RUC Change Management Team. This team was charged with designing and implementing a strategic plan for major policing reforms, which were part of a comprehensive criminal justice and security sector reform program—a key strand of the 1998 Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement (GFA).

From 2001 until 2004, I served in the renamed Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) as regional commander responsible for implementing major reforms in all aspects of police operations. From these vantage points and drawing from lessons learned from my involvement in international policing missions, including the leadership of the European Union's Rule of Law Mission in Iraq, I share my insights into the challenges of postconflict police reforms and countering violent extremism (CVE) and offer recommendations to those strategists and leaders engaged in such a process.

## Rule of Law and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

Over the last 20 years, it has become widely accepted that personal safety, security, accountability, and justice are essential elements of the peace and good governance agenda and crucial for achieving development goals. Underrepresented, poor, and marginalized populations are disproportionately affected by insecurity and injustice, particularly in conflict-affected contexts. Effective and locally legitimate community policing schemes that are rooted in, representative of, and answerable to communities are critical for resolving conflict and addressing conditions conducive to violence and violent extremism.

The centrality of democratic, rule of law–based institutions and the effective provision of justice have long been recognized by the international counterterrorism community as the bases for effectively prosecuting terrorists and stemming conditions conducive to violence and violent extremism. The United Nations has increasingly promoted the engagement of communities and community-based organizations as credible and critical partners in CVE.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, greater attention and resources have been mobilized to engage civil society organizations and community leaders and empower them to achieve a wide range of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) objectives. Yet, the security environment and institutional challenges extant in many conflict-affected countries tend to undermine national efforts to adopt rule of law–based counterterrorism and P/CVE measures. It is the practice of governance and the relationship between government security and justice actors and the community that often determines the quality and limits of community engagement.

Neither communities nor justice and security sector practitioners own the problems of crime and violence exclusively or carry the sole responsibility for finding solutions. Experienced individuals, groups, and organizations representing diverse backgrounds and disciplines must contribute to comprehensive strategies and multidimensional responses to violent extremism and terrorism. Where police-community relations are troubled, antagonistic, or worse, the ultimate aims of violence reduction, peace-building, and P/CVE efforts

cannot be achieved. Furthermore, intercommunal violence and conflict tends to deepen tensions between state and society as justice and security services are or are portrayed as partial, taking sides in the conflict and using extreme measures to protect the status quo. As the situation deteriorates, fractures between some sections of society and criminal justice institutions, including security forces, widen, and distrust becomes the norm. This feeds into narratives and experiences of grievances and repression and can be exploited by those who seek to delegitimize the state and its forces.

Justice and security sector reforms, in order to strengthen public trust and credibility and display state responsiveness to community needs, are therefore crucial factors in addressing underlying drivers of violence and violent extremism, as well as for building and sustaining peace.

The Northern Ireland conflict and eventual peace process provide a useful case study of how a police force performing a central role in conflict can transform from a highly militarized and unrepresentative organization, demonized and distrusted by some within deeply divided communities, to a police service that is accountable to and enjoys the confidence of the public. This paradigm shift from employing primarily reactive counterterrorism approaches to a more proactive community-oriented style of “policing in partnership” can offer lessons for strategists and policymakers struggling to achieve concrete P/CVE gains. Community policing is a familiar, well-used term in global law enforcement; but in divided communities emerging from conflict, it has particular connotations and presents specific challenges.

All conflicts, insurgencies, violent extremism, and episodes of social unrest have their own particular histories and contexts, but some lessons from Northern Ireland appropriately amended and adapted are transferrable to other situations. These lessons can and should be considered to inform future strategies being designed and implemented to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Before offering lessons, a brief background is necessary on the factors that gave rise to the Troubles and the challenges that they posed for the security sector, the rule of law, and those involved in peace-building.

<sup>1</sup> UN Security Council, S/RES/2178, 24 September 2014, para. 16; UN General Assembly, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary General*, A/70/674, 24 December 2015.

## Northern Ireland's Downward Spiral Into Violence and Conflict

The partition of Ireland into the independent Republic of Ireland in the south and Northern Ireland (Ulster) in 1922 brought with it a hardening of mutually opposing identities among the island's Catholic and Protestant communities. Furthermore, the police in Ireland (the entire country until 1922 and in Northern Ireland after partition) performed roles that differed from other police services in the United Kingdom. Unlike other UK police, the RUC was armed and was charged with security duties, specifically focused around countering any potential or real threat from Irish Nationalists.

The country from its formation was divided into two main traditions. The majority pro-British (Unionist) Protestants in Northern Ireland, although a majority in the north, saw themselves as culturally and politically British and were suspicious of the separatist inclinations among their Irish Catholic neighbors. At the same time, pro-Irish (Nationalist) Catholics were in the minority in the north and unquestionably subject to discrimination and unequal treatment under the Unionist-dominated government of Northern Ireland. From the outset, the RUC was given the role of maintaining the political status quo in addition to normal policing duties. Following the partition, communities held very fixed views about the acceptability of the police and its role in society. When conflict erupted, these views moved to the extremes, and a solution to this long-term issue seemed unlikely.

From Northern Ireland's formation in 1922 through the 1960s, notably during World War II and a 1956–1962 border campaign, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) engaged in violent campaigns using bombs and bullets against police in particular to strike a blow for Irish nationalism. Yet, there was little support for such actions, and opposition never crystallized into a mass movement. The attempts to foment a nascent insurgency were quickly quelled.

By the late 1960s, the situation would change dramatically. As the decade drew to a close, frustration over the lack of progress on the civil rights agenda and increased sectarian hostility manifested in increasingly

confrontational public demonstrations, riots, and an escalation of political violence. The RUC was placed at the forefront of the conflict, and its actions at the time were seen to be repressive, one sided, and heavy handed. In hindsight, when a community is divided and descending into conflict, the police clearly have a major challenge when they are tasked to perform security duties and provide normal policing services, especially when those security duties include preventing marches and other forms of nonviolent protest. Many scathing criticisms of the RUC in terms of its political direction, role, composition, leadership, and performance during the late 1960s describe how the force became even more distant and distrusted by many in the Catholic community. The 1969 report by the Cameron Commission provided an insight into the primary factors underlying the growing tensions, including a “rising sense of continuing injustice and grievance among large sections of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland.”<sup>2</sup> It also identified concerns over the “existence of the Ulster Special Constabulary (the ‘B’ Specials) as a partisan and paramilitary force recruited exclusively from Protestants.”<sup>3</sup> The Specials supported the RUC and were another cause of grievance within the Catholic population.

In 1969, intercommunity conflict escalated. There were sectarian murders, riots, and homes burned on each side of the religious and political divide on an almost daily basis. The RUC simply could not cope. Instead of supplementing Northern Ireland with additional police resources from elsewhere in Great Britain, the UK government chose to militarize the situation. In August 1969, London dispatched 2,700 British troops to supplement the local police service. This total would increase to almost 30,000 at its peak. As the conflict intensified, the local police adopted a subordinate position in terms of dealing with the security situation. The military were handed prime responsibility and patrolled all areas of the country. In urban areas, particularly Catholic/Irish Nationalist housing estates, the army was confronted with situations that normally fell under the rubric of policing; but young infantry soldiers were not trained, equipped, or indeed suited to policing roles. Within months of arriving, the British troops had become targets for the IRA, and the conflict took a further downward trajectory.

<sup>2</sup> “Summary of Conclusions on Causes of Disorders,” ch. 16 in *Disturbances in Northern Ireland: Report of the Commission Appointed by the Governor of Northern Ireland*, Cmd. 532 (September 1969), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmsocameron2.htm#chap16>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

By 1971 the unrest had morphed into a bitter sectarian conflict, characterized by bombings, a heightened security presence, and tit-for-tat murders of Catholic and Protestants. Protestant/loyalist paramilitary organizations, such as the Ulster Volunteer Force, murdered Catholics while claiming they were defending Unionists from Republicans. The IRA meanwhile claimed it was defending Catholic nationalists and organized a terrorism campaign that murdered British soldiers and RUC officers and bombed commercial targets.

Faced with growing violence, the Northern Ireland government took emergency measures that can be judged now to be fatally flawed. On 9 August 1971, they introduced a policy of internment without trial and arrested 350 Catholics that day for alleged involvement in the IRA insurgency. Internment only deepened the hostility and resentment toward the authorities within Northern Ireland's Catholic community and is often quoted as being the basis for the IRA's most successful recruitment campaign. As the number of soldiers and police fatalities steadily rose, along with civilian casualties, the security forces reactions became more and more extreme. On Sunday, 30 January 1972, British soldiers opened fire on civilians in the aftermath of a peaceful demonstration against internment in Derry, killing 14 unarmed civil rights protesters and wounding 18 others. Such actions served to embitter sections of society that lost faith in the state and its forces and began to empathize with those engaged in violent extremism.<sup>4</sup>

## Early Lessons

Although this brief focuses primarily on postconflict transformations to policing, lessons can be learned from counterterrorism policies and practices implemented during the early years of Northern Ireland's conflict. An overmilitarized response and draconian emergency measures were detrimental in the long term, but context is everything. With the general public seeking governmental reassurance that society would be protected from violent extremists, it is easy to understand why

certain actions were taken at the time. Nevertheless, a clear lesson from the Northern Ireland experience is to think long term and strategically and consider what terrorists actually hope that the authorities will do. Ignoring grievances and using heavy-handed tactics, such as deploying thousands of troops to "police" society, can help terrorists to justify their actions, gain empathy and support, recruit more volunteers, and dehumanize and delegitimize the forces of law and order. This strategic folly is compounded when terrorists threaten, intimidate, and kill those members of their communities who contemplate cooperating with the security services.

Strategists and leaders must understand the strategy of violent extremists and what they hope the authorities will do and avoid playing into their hands. By trying to address the problem using military force and draconian emergency powers, the authorities unwittingly provided violent extremists with the responses they desired. Commentators have identified the dangerous trap into which successive Northern Ireland and UK governments fell with their overreaction and primarily militarized response to social unrest.<sup>5</sup> Instead of addressing the contemporary social and political injustices, the government recognized in the 1969 Cameron Commission report that grievances were ignored and the government's escalatory response fed the narrative of oppression that created more sympathy for extremist groups and brought more recruits to their cause.<sup>6</sup> Against the backdrop of contemporary counterterrorism challenges, similar state impulses can be observed today.

In light of recent analyses of appropriate and inappropriate approaches toward P/CVE, Northern Ireland for a considerable time was a classic case of what not to do.<sup>7</sup> Responses were short-sighted and overmilitarized and shaped in terms of victory and defeat—a zero-sum game. Failing to address underlying socioeconomic and political grievances and compromising human rights-based justice standards and, therefore, the democratic rule of law unwittingly compounded to fuel the further manifestation of the very violence that these measures

<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Sutton, "Appendix: Statistical Summary," in *An Index of Deaths From the Conflict in Ireland 1969–1993* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1994), <http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/book/#append> (information updated as of October 2002).

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Tom Parker, "It's a Trap: Provoking an Overreaction Is Terrorism 101," *RUSI Journal* 160, no. 3 (2015): 38–46.

<sup>6</sup> Dominic M. Beggan, "State Repression and Political Violence: Insurgency in Northern Ireland," *International Journal on World Peace* 23, no. 4 (December 2006): 61–90; Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat* (New York: Random House, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> See Richard English, *Terrorism: How to Respond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

were intended to suppress. Placing the police at the forefront of conflict created a vicious cycle in which police-community relations suffered. Militarization of the police, for example, joint patrols with the army, travel in armored police vehicles, and infantry-style armament and training, even if essential for officer safety, can inadvertently cause the police to become more distant from communities and is ultimately counterproductive to the overall aim of gaining public support and trust.

In some areas, violence rendered “normal” policing a nonstarter, and the needs and priorities of communities were relegated by the demands of the security situation. This short-term vacuum created long-term problems. It supported the narrative that matters vital to community members were less important to police than the maintenance of the state, which in turn undermined community trust and the legitimacy of the state. As the distance between local police forces and their communities widened, albeit due to threats or changing priorities, this created a “them and us” situation. The RUC’s overwhelmingly Protestant composition and its role as guardians of the established order had long undermined the trust and confidence of working-class Catholic communities in it. As the violence of the Troubles intensified, it had a negative impact on the RUC’s disposition, culture, and public image. Increasingly targeted by terrorist violence, police became insular and focused more on countering terrorism than everyday community safety.

The reticence between police and sections of the community to engage openly was not solely the preserve of the public. Police officers had learned to become very cautious because the conflict dominated all aspects of life for them. Due to the heavy threat of assassination, police officers, their equipment, their vehicles, their police stations, and their culture evolved in a more militaristic, hierarchal, and introverted manner. Male RUC officers were armed 24 hours a day for personal protection (females were unarmed until 1994). Officers wore body armor, carried automatic rifles and other weapons, patrolled in armored vehicles with military support, and worked in heavily fortified and protected police stations. Police officers’ children were often kept unaware of their parents’ jobs. Most officers used fake occupations, drove cars with false registration plates, varied routes to and from work, avoided routines, and tended to socialize almost exclusively with other

officers. These precautions were not adopted lightly: The Troubles would take the lives of more than 300 officers, murdered on and off duty, and thousands were injured during this time. Hundreds of officers and their families were relocated under threat of assassination, and no officer was left untouched by the severe stress and trauma of policing a society in conflict.

Working-class Catholic communities in which the IRA mostly organized and operated were subjected to more intense and militarized forms of policing, further eroding their trust and confidence in the police service and the state. In working-class Unionist areas, there was a much more ambivalent attitude toward the police, at times embracing “their” police service and at others hostile toward it. As trust eroded within communities, a growing sense of isolation and fear of reprisal from paramilitary groups widened the growing rift. As a consequence, information and evidence normally provided by communities was less forthcoming, and security forces in turn placed more emphasis on covert intelligence gathering. As the police became more security focused and more intelligence led, the gap between the police and certain sections of society became wider, playing into the hands of those who sought to delegitimize the police force and replace it as the protector of their communities. For the Catholic Nationalists in Northern Ireland, the RUC was not afforded their confidence and trust. Police were simply not perceived to be impartial, representative, accountable, open, and transparent with human rights protection and community policing at the core. As long as the conflict ensued and security duties took precedence, it seemed unlikely that this would change.

Because of the sectarian conflict in which police found themselves and the organization’s composition, role, and focus, i.e., protecting lives, including their own, the RUC became more and more distant from some communities. Undoubtedly, this led to perceptions, emphasized by those opposed to the status quo, that issues of importance to the communities mattered little to the police. Often, in high-risk areas, police responses to a report of domestic violence, a traffic collision, or even shoplifting, were delayed more than 24 hours, often due to legitimate concerns about a “come-on” drawing officers into an ambush. In these circumstances, faced every day, even relatively apolitical citizens would eventually lose faith in the police and consider going to their local paramilitary leaders to resolve issues.



In time, the shortcomings of the militarized approach would become apparent to the authorities. By 1976, the need for a police-led, rule of law response was acknowledged. A new strategy, spelled out in a restricted internal paper titled “The Way Ahead,” identified what appeared to be a more sophisticated approach: police were to take primacy and be supported by the military. The idea that the civil powers would assume control, using criminal justice techniques, was interpreted at the time as a major step forward in demilitarizing the conflict. Massive investment in local policing resulted in an increase in RUC manpower from a force of around 4,000 full-time officers and 1,300 reservists in 1971 to more than 7,300 full-time officers and 4,800 reservists in 1981.<sup>8</sup> During the heavy recruitment drive of the 1970s, the vast majority of new recruits were 18 and 19 years old; and the RUC changed rapidly from a force manned by middle-aged, experienced officers into a police service with one of the world’s youngest average ages (around 25 at one time).

In the early 1970s, during the period of military primacy, tasking soldiers with undertaking a policing role for which they were not suited and ill prepared was a mistake. Similarly, expecting police officers to become more militarized was bound to create problems. Turning police officers into soldiers is not the basis for effective policing, nor is it an effective long-term strategy against political violence and terrorism. Yet time and time again, in conflict and postconflict situations and increasingly as a matter of everyday policing in peaceful environments,<sup>9</sup> strategists and policymakers continue to do it. Militarizing the RUC—turning them into “combat cops,” as one visiting FBI officer described<sup>10</sup>—was never a deliberate objective. Yet, with hindsight it is easy to see that, as the force took the lead in counterterrorism activities with military resources in support, an organizational culture developed that was macho, militaristic, and intelligence led. Placing the RUC at the forefront of security operations had many short-term advantages, such as making use of local knowledge and a wide range of policing skills. Training was enhanced, and specialists in all areas of policing honed their skills, particularly within Special Branch, the RUC’s intelligence section. Yet, improved technical

investigation capabilities, advanced communications and intelligence-gathering techniques, and enhanced counterinsurgency methods were not long-term solutions. Lives were undoubtedly saved, but there were many inherent problems regarding prosecutions, not least because the identities of informants and methodology use had to be protected. Failure to prosecute and convict many combatants became a cause of great concern about delivery of justice. Consequently, it would take more radical steps to bridge the gap between the police and sections of the Northern Ireland community and bring an end to the conflict.

### Critical Success Factors to Conflict Resolution and Security Sector Reform

On 10 April 1998, after decades of violence followed by a period of ceasefires, the major political parties in Northern Ireland, along with the Irish and UK governments, presided over a pivotal breakthrough in the Northern Ireland conflict with the signing of the GFA. Passed overwhelmingly in referendums held in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the agreement looked toward a future in which political differences among communities within Northern Ireland, between north and south, and between the islands of Great Britain and Ireland would be resolved through democratic and peaceful means on the basis of partnership, equality, and mutual respect. To that end, the agreement proposed a wide range of constitutional, legislative, institutional, and procedural measures to safeguard human, political, and civil rights; address economic, social, and cultural grievances; enhance justice and security; support reconciliation; and address the suffering of victims of violence.

Transforming the police service was seen by the agreement’s drafters as essential for building and sustaining peace in Northern Ireland. The agreement laid out a vision for the future and an agreed framework of principles that would underpin a police and criminal justice reform process. In the GFA section on policing and justice, the drafters recognized the history of deep social divisions that undermined community trust and support for the RUC, as well as the sacrifices of RUC

<sup>8</sup> Martin Melaugh, Fionnuala McKenna, and Brendan Lynn, “Background Information on Northern Ireland Society - Security and Defence,” CAIN Web Service, 16 November 2017, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ni/security.htm#01> (“Strength (Number) of the RUC/PSNI, and the UDR/RIR, 1938, 1971 to 2010–11”).

<sup>9</sup> For examples in the United States, see Radley Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America’s Police Forces* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Jim Reece, presentation on post-traumatic stress disorder to RUC officers, RUC headquarters, Belfast, 1987.

officers and their families over the course of the Troubles. The drafters hoped that the political space created by the GFA would provide an opening for “a new beginning to policing in Northern Ireland with a police service capable of attracting and sustaining support from the community as a whole.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet, the agreement deliberately avoided offering any detailed plans for policing and justice reform, instead outlining terms of reference for the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (ICP). The ICP was chaired by Chris Patten, a former governor of Hong Kong, but was selected with input and approval from the Irish and U.S. governments. Comprised of representatives from each side of Northern Ireland’s religious and cultural divides and international policing experts, but no local politicians, it was perceived as being impartial and objective. Its legitimacy was reinforced by its year-long exercise in consultation and exploration of best policing practices worldwide. The ICP was tasked with producing “proposals for future policing structures and arrangements, including means of encouraging widespread community support for those arrangements.”<sup>12</sup> Over the course of 15 months, the Patten Commission, as the ICP came to be known, conducted consultations with more than 10,000 members of the public in 40 public meetings in every district council area of Northern Ireland; had individual meetings with clerics, politicians, civil liberties groups, community and youth workers, editors, academics, and others; visited every police subdivision, police stations, and headquarters and had meetings with individual police officers; received approximately 2,500 written submissions; performed a cultural audit of the police and a survey of public attitudes on policing; and engaged police services abroad and in international forums.<sup>13</sup>

## Policing With the Community

In its final report, the Patten Commission outlined 175 recommendations for the reform of policing culture, practice, oversight, and accountability, covering areas ranging from human rights, accountability, and com-

munity policing to management and personnel, structure, size, and composition to police culture, ethics, and regalia. In it, the commission articulated its vision of “the police working in partnership with the community; the community thereby participating in its own policing; and the two working together, mobilising resources to solve problems affecting public safety over the longer term rather than the police, alone, reacting short term to incidents as they occur.”<sup>14</sup> In its fullest sense, community policing came to be understood as a means and an end. A new Northern Ireland policing model comprising a human rights–based ethos, independent oversight and accountability, public consultation, and community representation and partnership was to be the way ahead.

Many RUC officers viewed the commission positively, and although there were skeptics and genuine fears about engaging with certain community representatives, for example, former paramilitaries, there was a certain degree of pragmatism within the police at the time. To put it bluntly, many police believed that anything that prevented more officers from being murdered was worth trying, even if there was widespread disquiet about prisoner releases and initial concerns about the potential roles they might play in communities.

At the same time, the sheer scale of proposed reforms frustrated many police officers who had been living in the line of fire, working to prevent violence while they themselves were prime targets of terrorist groups. In their view, they were caught between a rock and a hard place because communities and politicians had failed to settle the problem of sectarianism and bigotry. For some serving officers and the wider establishment, it caused disbelief, shock, and outright resistance when it became clear that the police itself and policing arrangements would have to radically change. To some, this was seen as pandering to the paramilitaries by shifting the blame from those who took life to those who protected life. Yet, many police recognized the fundamental importance of a new beginning for policing in Northern Ireland. Importantly, a severance plan was

<sup>11</sup> “The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement,” p. 23, para 1, [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IE%20GB\\_980410\\_Northern%20Ireland%20Agreement.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IE%20GB_980410_Northern%20Ireland%20Agreement.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (ICP), “A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland,” September 1999, para. 2.3, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/police/patten/patten99.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 7.3.

part of the overall strategy for those who could not buy in to the new future. This enabled some to depart with dignity and a degree of financial security. Resourcing in terms of finance, skilled personnel, technical support, and time was another important critical success factor.

The process driving the community-police reform agenda did not occur in a vacuum. It was one of several integral, long-term, and still ongoing institutional, legal, political, and social initiatives initiated by the GFA. The RUC's transition into the PSNI and the transformation toward policing with the community was part of the broader peace-building agenda, including substantial reforms of the criminal justice system and Northern Ireland's political and governance framework. These efforts were overlapping and mutually reinforcing. Progress required coordination across a broad and representative coalition of support and leadership from the community, sustained political buy-in, and the dedicated financial and programmatic assistance of international governmental and civil society partners. Before offering a broader retrospective on the critical success factors for advancing Northern Ireland's police reform agenda, it may be useful to reflect on three specific factors that were critical to the success of the change process within policing. These are effective leadership, cultural transformation, and independent oversight.

## Effective Leadership in the Police and in the Community

The Northern Ireland experience demonstrates the importance of leadership in achieving change at the societal, political, and institutional levels. Leadership across the policing and community spectrum was a crucial element in the normalization of relationships. It took courage from police and community leaders to take the first steps toward building positive and meaningful relationships despite the legacy of conflict and an environment of mutual distrust and hostility.<sup>15</sup>

Reformers recognized the mutually reinforcing nature of police credibility and community policing. Public

credibility and trust in the police service were essential for the establishment of effective community partnerships, and effective community partnerships were essential for improving the credibility of the police service. Progress in either case would not be achieved by new legislation and standing orders alone. Rather, it would depend on the fundamental shifts in police institutional culture. These changes were driven by leadership and buy-in among police officers and community members alike. The police reform process was driven not only from the top, but across the ranks of the organization and society at large. The RUC leadership hierarchy was a key influencer and advocate of the change process. The RUC senior leadership, policy committee, and change management teams played a “conscious and nuanced” role in facilitating, implementing, and reinforcing change throughout the reform process.<sup>16</sup> Some have noted that police organizations tend to be insular and can be resistant to change.<sup>17</sup> Although this may have been true of the rank and file, in their cultural audit of the RUC, the Patten Commission found that 82 percent of RUC officers at the rank of superintendent and above supported the organizational change process. The buy-in of the RUC leadership played no small role in the progress of reforms. At the onset of the reform process, few police officers had much experience in change management, but many were trained, mentored, and supported by leading experts in the field.

A lot of potential conflict was taken out of the situation when the chief constable announced that he would accept all ICP recommendations other than the name change and a few other symbolic and cultural issues, such as uniforms and regalia that would ultimately be adopted in the years that followed despite being held in high esteem by RUC officers and their families. Although ill-suited to the purposes of community policing, the RUC's militaristic, hierarchical, pragmatic nature greatly benefitted the building of internal momentum for reform. The leadership took great pains to demonstrate to the rank and file that reform was acceptable, necessary, and achievable. In time,

<sup>15</sup> Jonny Byrne, “Reflections on the Northern Ireland Experience: The Lessons Underpinning the Normalisation of Policing and Security in a Divided Society,” Police Service of Northern Ireland, Intercomm, and Saferworld, June 2014, p. 10, <http://uir.ulster.ac.uk/37801/1/reflections-on-the-northern-ireland-experience.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Roz Goldie and Joanne Murphy, “Embedding the Peace Process: The Role of Leadership, Change and Government in Implementing Key Reforms in Policing and Local Government in Northern Ireland,” *International Journal of Peace Studies* 15, no. 2 (Autumn/Winter 2010): 33–58.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see Alan Beckley, “Capacity Building,” in *Toolkit on Police Integrity*, ed. Pierre Aepli (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2012), p. 256, [http://issat.dcaf.ch/download/7322/67149/Toolkit\\_ENG\\_screen.pdf](http://issat.dcaf.ch/download/7322/67149/Toolkit_ENG_screen.pdf).



change was embraced and was embarked on over the course of an initial 10-year implementation plan.

One of the key elements of the successful organizational change was the leaders' decision to decentralize and delegate to the local level, within agreed parameters, the implementation of operational community policing. Certain initiatives had to be directed and implemented at headquarters in partnership with government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), for example, a new code of ethics, a human rights strategy, affirmative recruitment policies, and a training strategy, but the community engagement process was delegated to district and local command to a large degree. This "tight-loose" management system worked well, kept with the spirit of the new beginning recommended by the ICP, and created buy-in from local police officers who were trusted and given the freedom to consult, involve, and engage their local communities and their representatives.

The Change Management Team itself was a diverse group with strong professional experience and opinions. Fortunately, the RUC had invested a lot of resources and time in leadership development; and the team was exposed on many occasions to international policing models and support from leading experts in strategic planning, change management, conflict resolution, and community policing. Consequently, as observed at the time by researchers and oversight bodies, the team was not a group of yes-men but opinionated professionals who genuinely supported the vast majority of the changes.

During the decades following the RUC's transition into the PSNI, it would be up to leaders invested in and inculcated with the new policing culture to maintain and continue to reinforce the reform process. This was not a short-term program but rather part of a process that included formal education, professional training, and insights into other organizations undergoing transformation, along with structured engagement with all stakeholders. The need to foster buy-in and nurture the development of the next generation of police leadership was recognized early in the process. While the public was being consulted and the ICP researched good practices in other parts of the world, the RUC was preparing for change. Community policing models were examined and considered by a select team of future leaders who sought to focus on reality and not

simply rhetoric. Field visits to U.S. cities such as New York, Atlanta, and San Diego by the team and civil society representatives, academics, and trained facilitators provided examples of good practices and the opportunity to engage with future partners. The dialogue helped to identify obstacles to community policing and how to overcome them.

In putting "policing with the community" into practice as a driving philosophy with accompanying principles, the RUC had to fundamentally reconceptualize its assumptions about hierarchal leadership, particularly when dealing with others. Communities do not function as hierarchal systems. A community-centric approach to policing demanded a decentralized police service responsive and accountable to local needs. Such a new system requires community members to be enabled and empowered as partners in co-producing their own safety and security. The reform process streamlined and decentralized the command structure, delegating more responsibilities to local commanders to be more responsive to policing needs at the local level; but in parallel, it was the empowerment of communities and representatives to engage with policing in formal and informal structures that enabled meaningful change.

## Transforming Police Culture From Security Force to Community Service

The postconflict transformation of policing in Northern Ireland involved convincing police officers at all levels in the organization that community policing is not a "softer" approach to law and order. The old credo that "only a police officer understands policing" is now seen to be outdated and inaccurate. Most people recognize good policing and bad policing when they witness or experience it, and therefore, responding to public opinions and perceptions makes good sense. Transforming police culture from the militarized, macho, and hierarchal disposition that emerged out of the Troubles into one that embraced human rights, accountability, and community engagement required fostering fundamental shifts in how police viewed themselves and their role in society.

The Patten Commission envisioned police service in which officers "should perceive their jobs in terms of the protection of human rights. Respect for the human rights of all, including suspects, should be an instinct

rather than a procedural point to be remembered.”<sup>18</sup> The need to consult and involve communities because policing is too important and sensitive to be left to the police alone was at the heart of the reform process. Upholding the rights of community members as a *modus operandi* had to be infused into policing culture through multiple overlapping and mutually reinforcing strategic efforts at the level of affirmative action in recruitment and the overhauling of recruit and in-service training, devolved organizational structures and chains of command, codes of ethics and internal policy guidelines, enabling legislation, and, of course, community partnerships that would need to be forged over time through consistency in service delivery and concrete improvements through community-police engagement. For most new officers recruited after the GFA and many of the pre-GFA officers, placing human rights and community engagement at the center of their work was accepted as the way forward. Some resented and resisted changes, but as officers realized that community policing could provide long-lasting solutions to recurring problems from antisocial behavior right up to insurgency, terrorism, and attacks on police, their resistance to some of the changes abated. Whenever local officers saw that community representatives were prepared to take some responsibility for addressing local safety and justice concerns, such as through community-based restorative justice schemes, very effective partnerships were formed.

A starting point for the cultural evolution of policing in Northern Ireland was the recognition that community policing means engagement, consulting and involving all sides to a conflict, such as community members, state and nonstate actors, and even former combatants including ex-paramilitary prisoners once perceived as enemies of the state. Civil and human rights defenders who were viewed by many police officers as terrorism apologists hostile to police were to be engaged as partners in police oversight.<sup>19</sup> Ex-prisoners and former paramilitaries who had been involved in terrorism campaigns that killed and injured thousands, including

300 police officers, were to be engaged as actors with credibility and agency in their own communities, deserving of equal service, respect, and representation.<sup>20</sup> No one would have dreamed of these developments during the conflict, but they are tangible illustrations of how policing and justice culture has shifted over time.

Community policing as a principle and practice is defined by bringing the police closer to the community and the community closer to the police, and this can happen in all aspects of the organization and its operation (e.g., recruitment, selection, training, performance appraisal, and problem solving). Beginning in 1992 when I was in charge of recruit training, I began opening training sessions to community representatives concerned about police performance, oversight, and accountability. These representatives were not hand-picked “friends of the police” but included real critics who would challenge our approach to training and question the assumptions behind trainee decision-making. This is just one example of practices that foster a culture of community involvement in policing. Another is public town hall meetings, involving question-and-answer sessions with the chief constable for the public and rank and file officers. Public dialogue is a crucial element in the promotion of public engagement and helps inculcate democratic accountability, internal accountability, and transparency in policing. In Northern Ireland, platforms for direct interface and consultations between local police and community members were institutionalized under a number of initiatives, such as Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs). The PCSPs bring together community members, local PSNI officers, and other organizations contributing to community safety to a platform for consultation and engagement, the identification of community safety priorities, partnerships to deliver on those priorities, and performance monitoring.<sup>21</sup>

Another issue in the RUC’s cultural transformation was its use of symbols, ceremonies, and uniforms. The

<sup>18</sup> ICP, “A New Beginning,” para. 4.13.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the report titled “Human Rights on Duty” was initially dismissed by police and yet later acknowledged as a useful source of good police practices. Mary O’Rawe and Linda Moore, “Human Rights on Duty: Principles for Better Policing - International Lessons for Northern Ireland,” Committee on the Administration of Justice, December 1997, <http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/caj.org.uk/2017/03/15130857/No.-37-Human-Rights-on-Duty-Principles-for-better-policing-International-lessons-for-Northern-Ireland-December-1997.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Many ex-prisoners became credible voices, leaders, and partners in community safety and justice initiatives, for example, as facilitators in community restorative justice programs, such as Northern Ireland Alternatives and Community Restorative Justice Ireland.

<sup>21</sup> For more information, see Northern Ireland Policing Board, “Policing and Community Safety Partnerships,” n.d., <https://www.pcsp.org/> (accessed 28 November 2017).

internal RUC culture and public perceptions of that culture were intertwined in systems of meaning reflected in outward cultural symbols.<sup>22</sup> Some commentators have stated that, to some in the Catholic community, the RUC and associated regalia equally invoked the sectarianism, discrimination, and legacy of a troubled past that fueled the conflict. To many, however, these same symbols represented the heroism and sacrifice of a police service doing its duty under exceptionally dangerous circumstances. In the eyes of RUC officers, their flag, badge, and insignia embodied their pride, professionalism, and deeply held values. Although recognizing this dilemma, the ICP maintained that to attract and sustain the support of the community, the community must be able to identify with the outward cultural representation of the police. The commission recommended that the RUC be renamed the PSNI, complete with a new badge, flag, and symbol devoid of association with either sectarian community, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland.<sup>23</sup> This reform was one of the most difficult for RUC officers to swallow. In time, however, these changes would prove crucial in legitimizing the police in the eyes of the Catholic community and would reinforce the overarching effort to institutionalize the PSNI's new human rights, accountability, and community partnership orientation.

## Overlapping Mechanisms of Independent Oversight and Accountability

Police can earn greater public confidence when communities feel that the police are answerable to the community and provide services according to the communities' needs. Commentators have noted that before the Troubles and leading up to the conclusion of the GFA, Northern Ireland communities lacked the tools and powers to hold their police service to account. The mechanisms, laws, and institutions that had been put in place for police oversight were not accessible and were deemed to be politicized, nonadversarial, and deficient. In its report, the Patten Commission highlighted the multiple, overlapping aspects of accountability vital to policing with the community.<sup>24</sup> These include

- democratic accountability, in which community representatives define the agenda of the police and hold them responsible in its delivery;
- transparency, when the community is fully appraised of policing matters and is empowered to ask questions and demand answers from its police service;
- legal accountability, under which police are answerable to the law as any other community member and subject to the penalties of law for any abuse of power;
- financial accountability, under which police performance must demonstrate its value for the public money it spends; and
- internal accountability, under which police are answerable to the police organization and its code of conduct, policies and regulations, chain of command, and fellow officers, which is an aspect deeply rooted in police culture.

Based on the commission's recommendations, three new institutions were established to provide a foundational framework for public oversight and accountability over the policing in Northern Ireland. At the microlevel, District Policing Partnership Boards were established as district-level forums for elected representatives and the public to set local policing priorities, forge community safety partnerships, and challenge police policy.<sup>25</sup> At the level of legal accountability, the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (PONI) was established to receive, investigate, respond to, and compile data on trends in public complaints against the police for misconduct, incivility, and failures to perform. It is also empowered to conduct inquiries and investigations into incidents not subject to complaint and initiate a disciplinary process against police officers.<sup>26</sup> Finally, at the strategic level, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB), comprised of political appointees and independent members, was established and empowered to set medium-term objectives and priorities for policing. The NIPB does not exert operational or financial control over the PSNI,

<sup>22</sup> See Michele Lamb, "A Culture of Human Rights: Transforming Policing in Northern Ireland," *Policing* 2, no. 3 (January 2008): 386–393.

<sup>23</sup> ICP, "A New Beginning," para. 17.6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 5.4.

<sup>25</sup> In 2011, the PCSPs replaced the boards.

<sup>26</sup> See PONI, "The Police Complaints System in Northern Ireland," n.d., <https://policeombudsman.org/getmedia/02508825-5b89-4148-9b3c-58b939261d65/The-Police-Complaints-System-in-Northern-Ireland.PDF>.

but it has the authority to appoint and dismiss, if necessary, the chief constable, deputy chief constable, assistant chief constables, and senior civilian staff; consult widely with the local population on how its area is policed; set priorities and targets for police performance; monitor the work of the police; oversee complaints against senior officers; and discipline senior officers or forward evidence to the Public Prosecution Service for criminal proceedings.<sup>27</sup>

The PCSPs, PONI, and NIPB are endowed with legal mandates outlining their statutory duties, are public facing and operate on the basis of transparency, and are subject to their own codes of conduct, performance standards, and oversight and accountability mechanisms and standards.<sup>28</sup> They form a hard core of more than 30 nongovernmental and governmental organizations and entities that play formal and informal roles in all aspects of PSNI accountability. In addition to the institutions established based on the recommendations of the Patten Commission, the PSNI was also subject to literally hundreds of other recommendations provided by many other oversight bodies such as inspectorates, governmental departments, and laws such as the Human Rights Act. A master plan incorporating all the strategic objectives and specific recommendations was formulated by the Change Management Team with measurable, time-bound performance indicators against which the PSNI was held to account, formally and informally, by a range of actors, including the aforementioned and the Independent Oversight Commissioner, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Criminal Justice Inspectorate for Northern Ireland, and the Committee on the Administration of Justice.

A massive amount of intellectual and social capital has been brought to bear in fostering a community-oriented, transparent, and accountable institutional culture within the police service. Local and international academics, charitable foundations, and NGOs contributed to an extensive body of literature on community

perceptions of police and policing and justice needs in Northern Ireland. Over time, a culture of openness and information sharing has been fostered, with the PSNI and the community of stakeholders charged with its oversight and accountability investing heavily in effective communications. Annual strategies, investigative reports, thematic evaluations, community perception surveys, institutional assessments, and changes in policy and practice are made accessible to the public and undertaken with wide public consultation.

Reinforcing the PSNI's internal and legal accountability, the duties of police officers were enshrined in a new code of ethics and regulations incorporated in the comprehensive Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. Throughout the United Kingdom since the days of Sir Robert Peel, the duties of the police were to protect life and property, preserve order, prevent the commission of offenses, and take measures to bring offenders to justice. The new code of ethics and the police act codified two additional requirements when carrying out these duties: "police officers shall obey and uphold the law, protect human dignity and uphold the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons" and "police officers shall, as far as practicable, carry out their functions in cooperation with, and with the aim of securing the support of, the local community."<sup>29</sup> For the first time in Northern Ireland, the human, interactive, relationship-building, peace-strengthening side of policing became a legal requirement and a test against which all police actions in the future could be measured. Public confidence and trust were now expressly set as the main goals, with community policing to be the "golden thread" weaving its way through and holding everything together.

## Critical Success Factors

The policing and security landscape of Northern Ireland has undergone significant cultural transformation. Such transformation takes time and steady commitment. Nearly two decades into implementation of the ICP's recommendations, the PSNI has come to

<sup>27</sup> NIPB, "Our Work," n.d., <https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/our-work> (accessed 28 November 2017).

<sup>28</sup> The PCSPs are mandated under the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2011. For the legislative framework governing the work of the police ombudsman, see PONI, "Legislation," n.d., <https://policeombudsman.org/About-Us/Legislation> (accessed 28 November 2017). The NIPB is primarily mandated under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 as amended by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2003.

<sup>29</sup> NIPB and PSNI, "Police Service of Northern Ireland Code of Ethics 2008," arts. 1.1–1.2, <https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/sites/nipb/files/media-files/code-of-ethics.pdf>.

enjoy the general confidence of a large majority of the public and made great strides in building a more representative and accountable community-oriented police service.<sup>30</sup>

Although the peace process is still a work in progress and the gains made since the conclusion of the GFA are at risk of reversal, the achievements of Northern Ireland's police and broader reform agenda were enabled by a framework of interlocking critical success factors.

- **An agreed vision.** Stakeholders must share and support the achievement of a mutually agreed long-term goal or outcome. The GFA and the ICP report provided visions of the future for Northern Ireland and for policing to which all sides could commit.
- **Political will.** Senior political leadership and other key influencers must be committed to supporting strategic change. Although it took time, eventually all Northern Ireland political parties bought into the peace process and supported the police reforms. Yet, in any divided society, fractures can still occur, causing political support to evaporate and leaving a vacuum for extremists. Police reform is only one side of the equation in peace-building; political progress is equally important.
- **Community engagement.** The public must have a voice and role to play in achieving strategic change. A broad and representative community coalition of support within an organization and across society as a whole provided the critical mass for a change agenda. Overwhelming support for the GFA and full engagement in policing, partnership, and oversight arrangements at all levels has been a big part of successful conflict resolution and peace-building in Northern Ireland.
- **A strategic plan.** The logical, step-by-step process to achieve the desired change should be clearly articulated based on the input of key stakeholders and should detail the roles of each in implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability for implementing change processes. All 175 ICP recommendations were placed at the center of a comprehensive strategic plan that was implemented by the new PSNI, the community, and a range of partner institutions and organizations.
- **Adequate resources.** Organizational capacity, qualified personnel, financial resources, infrastructure, and technology should be appropriately allocated toward achieving strategic change and accounted for in the strategic plan. The PSNI were fortunate because appropriate financial resources, personnel and technical skills were available to facilitate the long-term and comprehensive reform program.
- **Enabling laws.** Strategic change should be underpinned by new, existing, or revised national law, regulations, and policy, which mandate, democratically enforce, enable, and legitimize elements of the change agenda. The reforms in Northern Ireland were enabled by a whole raft of new laws addressing issues from the past and establishing new institutions.
- **Security.** Chronic insecurity and conflict severely undermine efforts to support strategic change. A stable and secure peace is an enabling environment for reform. The ceasefires and decommissioning of paramilitary groups' weapons enabled the resolution of conflict and the commencement of peace-building measures.
- **Leadership.** Current, future, and sometimes past leaders at all levels of an organization and the community should have a role in shaping, overseeing, and implementing change. Leadership must know when change is necessary and how to drive and manage changes. Leadership was and still is a critical factor in the Northern Ireland peace process and justice and security sector reform program.
- **Time.** Change is the confluence of the achievement of enabling and mutually reinforcing short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Change takes time to bear fruit. Building more responsive public institutions and building a peaceful society must be viewed as ongoing processes that never truly end.

These factors played no small role in the progress made on the PSNI reform agenda and can serve as a useful framework for strategists, policymakers, and other stakeholders working to achieve justice and security development gains.

<sup>30</sup> NIPB, "Public Perceptions of the Police, PCSPs and the Northern Ireland Policing Board," November 2016, <https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/sites/nipb/files/media-files/omnibus-survey-april-2016.pdf>.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

This brief has tried to demonstrate how to undertake comprehensive security sector reforms in the P/CVE context. As such, it provides more than simply an aspirational list of what to do. It offers a cause for optimism along with an evidence-based template for reforms that others may wish to consider.

Any list of good practices also should be explicit about poor practices, and early experiences in Northern Ireland demonstrate things to avoid in P/CVE: failure to address underlying social, political, and economic grievances; deployment of repressive security measures against communities mobilizing to demonstrate their frustration with the lack of progress in rectifying those grievances; and further militarization to achieve a zero-sum victory against escalating terrorism and intercommunal violence. For some, the disposition and composition of the RUC was among the grievances that led to conflict, along with its response to the disturbances during the civil rights movement. The ultimate militarization of the situation heightened fear and mistrust within sections of society, further embroiling police and justice agencies in the conflict. Understanding these missteps puts into sharp focus the tremendous work that must be undertaken to reform a police force.

Political violence, violent extremism, and terrorism are often exacerbated by or are the direct result of the state's failure to recognize and take meaningful action to rectify systemic discrimination, structural violence and abuse, relative deprivation, and social-political marginalization. When frustrations at these conditions reach a boiling point, for example, the rise of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, states have shown a tendency to prioritize protecting the state and the status quo. Failing to address causes of dissent can cause tensions and violence to escalate, perpetuating a cycle of conflict that appears impossible to break. Yet, the cycle of violence in Northern Ireland was halted, and the GFA and police reforms that emerged from the ICP offer a number of crucial lessons on good practices in P/CVE.

Processes of concrete, meaningful, and direct engagement among policymakers, government officials, civil society, and all segments of society were the means and the ends of the GFA and subsequent reforms. In the

grander strategic sense, governance was pursued as if driven by and for the purpose of building and sustaining public confidence and ownership over their institutions. Northern Ireland's adoption of "policing with the community" is emblematic of this design philosophy. Engagement with all sections of society has become the norm for policing in Northern Ireland and is a major strand to maintaining and building on the postconflict peace.

Some realism, indeed caution, must be injected. It is almost 20 years since the historic GFA was signed by the political groups in Northern Ireland's divided society. Nearly two decades into implementation of the ICP's recommendations, the PSNI has come to enjoy the general confidence of a large majority of the public and has made great strides in building a more representative and accountable community-oriented police service. Nevertheless, Northern Ireland continues to struggle to overcome the legacy of conflict. Even though it has enjoyed a period of relative calm in the past five years, violence and criminality among dissident republican and loyalist groups, although few in number and enjoying little public backing, continue to present an ongoing threat to local communities. Without continued effort and attention being paid to all the critical success factors identified above, things can stall or even go backwards. The political will for a new, shared Northern Ireland appears to be waning. The political situation is stalemated, and the two main parties are engaged in a conflict of words about future governance. This current vacuum in political development is providing space and opportunities for extremists to occupy and exploit. The danger is that police will be drawn into the conflict once again.

Policing in Northern Ireland is far from perfect, but the transition from the RUC to the PSNI, along with the new and related institutions, partnerships, and engagements, albeit incomplete, have moved the situation greatly forward. Yet, police and other justice and security sector reforms are but some pieces of the puzzle. Politics, politicians, and community leaders set the future direction. Societies determine the police services they receive. Northern Ireland and other conflict zones need to understand how to enable, nurture, and above all sustain policing reforms if a political settlement and the peaceful vision it offers is to become a long-lasting reality. Nevertheless, the main message

from Northern Ireland is a positive one: things can get better, but it takes a concerted effort to achieve successful transformation.

Following are recommendations for strategists and policymakers working to fuse justice and security sector reforms and P/CVE initiatives.

- **Involve experienced practitioners in policy development.** Practitioners who have actually experienced, designed, and led such reforms from the perspective of police and communities can offer valuable insights and perspectives. Every context is different, but many lessons can be drawn from the experiences of others.
- **Be aware of what terrorists want.** Understanding the reaction that terrorists and violent extremists want from authorities is a good starting point for strategic planners. A key objective for violent extremists is to legitimize their actions to a specific audience. In Northern Ireland, violent extremists targeted their violence against police officers in order to force reactions that would allow them to portray the police as illegitimate defenders of a corrupt status quo. Bearing this in mind and behaving accordingly is critical.
- **Avoid overreaction in favor of addressing grievances.** Policing in Northern Ireland at the outset of the violence was found to be incapable of resolving what soon developed into a province-wide, sectarian conflict. Attempts to defeat terrorism and intercommunal violence primarily by military means and draconian emergency measures are now perceived to be short-sighted and over-the-top reactions. By provoking overreaction by the state, violent extremists seek to delegitimize law enforcement while building sympathy for their cause and credence for their narrative. Repressive overreactions to perceived terrorism threats not only avoid addressing underlying drivers of violence but further serve terrorist organizations to gain empathy, recruits, and support.
- **Address policing-related grievances.** The role, composition, culture, and leadership of an indigenous police service may be a source of grievance that should be addressed before extremists can exploit it. In Northern Ireland, despite a large proportion of society and the police themselves seeing law enforcement services as heroic protectors, their actions and performance when placed on the front line against an insurgency can be perceived and portrayed as being one-sided, overly aggressive, and illegitimate. Police reform thus became a central part of Northern Ireland's conflict resolution process. Reforms focused not only on the police organization but all institutions that oversee policing and hold them to account.
- **Balance community policing and national security priorities.** Violent conflict and its impact on the disposition and public perceptions of justice and security actors can severely undermine the trust between police and communities. This distrust can deepen the rift between communities and the state and fuel underlying drivers of violence. Repairing these relationships after the conflict can add complications and challenges to the peace-building process. Adopting a comprehensive community-policing philosophy, with its attendant policies, practices, and guiding principles, can redress the balance when conflict has elevated security policing and relegated normal policing services.
- **Center policing strategies on community-based, human rights-oriented partnerships, even in conflict situations.** Intelligence will always be an essential part of counterterrorism and P/CVE, but its gathering and exploitation should never allow police-community relationships to be skewed or the police service's culture to become imbalanced to such a degree that they become counterproductive in the long term. Balancing intelligence-led policing with community-based policing that is open and transparent, accountable, impartial, and representative is a key challenge when dealing with clear and present threats and is effective in preventing and detecting crime.
- **Focus on critical success factors in police reform processes.** Of the critical success factors mentioned, from a practitioner's point of view, two are particularly significant: leadership and community engagement. Leaders are tasked with simplifying the complex and not complicating matters, and they can play a key role in managing change and exemplifying comprehensive community engagement in practice. Engaging with former critics and enemies, including ex-prisoners, is a key part to removing police from the conflict and building peace.

- **Aspire to build public trust and confidence in policing and the rule of law.** Conflict resolution and peace-building cannot succeed without community support for and engagement in policing and the criminal justice system. If major reforms are required to achieve these goals, reforms must

be carried out. Strategists and leaders must focus on maximizing community involvement and partnerships and minimizing the adverse impact of actions, performances, or cultures that drive a wedge between police and communities.

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