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Security Sector Evolution: Understanding and Influencing How Security Institutions Change

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Volha Piotukh & Peter Wilson

Foreword

This paper represents an important contribution to the debate on security reform. To date, much of the discussion as well as programme activity has been around technical approaches to improving the capacity of security institutions and organisations and, latterly, local ownership. However, too frequently, ideas about local ownership never progress beyond paying lip service, whilst the operational aspects of what local ownership might mean in practice are frequently left aside. In addition, too much time is taken within the existing literature trying to say what is meant by the term 'Security Sector Reform', with no overall consensus currently reached.

The approach taken in this paper to evolutionary change based on the experience of Iraq and Sierra Leone, amongst others, shows that it is possible to develop an overarching framework that can not only encapsulate alternative definitions of what we might mean by the various processes surrounding security reform and development, but also provides flexibility over time. This latter point is important in terms of getting away from the blueprint approach that has so stifled so many attempts at external intervention in general.

The authors do not pretend to provide a panacea for the ills of academic approaches to security reform, but they do manage to provide a practical way forward developed from experience. The twin ideas of moving away from the rational model of technocratic intervention with rational domestic actors within institutions and the idea that intervention can help organisations become better evolvers is surely at the heart of any attempt to build sustainable capacity within security institutions. The ability of organisations to self-evolve is, of course, dependent on internal culture and this takes time and development rather than three or five year planning horizons coupled with the market.

This paper, then, is an important contribution to the debate in terms of providing a mechanism for moving away from technocratic rationalism and reorienting security reform towards cultures and evolving approaches.

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To the Rationalist, nothing is of value merely because it exists (and certainly not because it has existed for many generations), familiarity has no worth, and nothing is to be left standing for want of scrutiny. And his disposition makes both destruction and creation easier for him to understand and engage in, than acceptance or reform. To patch up, to repair (that is, to do anything which requires a patient knowledge of the material), he regards as waste of time: and he always prefers the invention of a new device to making use of a current and well-tried expedient. He does not recognize change unless it is a self-consciously induced change, and consequently he falls easily into the error of identifying the customary and the traditional with the changeless.

He has no sense of the cumulation of experience, only of the readiness of experience when it has been converted into a formula: the past is significant to him only as an encumbrance… He has no aptitude for that close and detailed appreciation of what actually presents itself…, but only the power of recognizing the large outline which a general theory imposes upon events. With an almost poetic fancy, he strives to live each day as if it were his first, and he believes that to form a habit is to fail.

Michael Oakeshott, Rationalism In Politics

Introduction

> "Our theories of how fundamental institutional change occurs are underdeveloped. The interaction of ideas, presumed behavioural repertoires, cultural assumptions, and organizational forms are complicated enough, but a theory of institutional change must also address political power and conflict. Hence, it is not surprising that an institutional approach may produce perverse results when processed through a policy paradigm committed to perceiving development as a 'technical' problem."
>
> (Evans, 2004)

The aim of this paper is to make a contribution to the under-theorised field of Security Sector Reform (SSR) studies (Egnell and Halden, 2009) and to support better design, implementation and review of SSR programmes. We borrow, from economics and strategic management, some perspectives on institutional change and we consider the implications of these insights for approaches to SSR.

Many current approaches to SSR adopt, implicitly, a rationalist approach which assumes that projects can be designed and implemented with a reasonable degree of certainty based on a high-level of advance knowledge. We believe this significantly under-estimates the complexity of SSR and over-estimates the degree to which reform can be planned in advance. Fortunately, alternative perspectives on institutional change are emerging which are better placed to deal with the complexity inherent in SSR. These perspectives include the evolutionary approach and the organisational learning approach[1]. Our choice is informed by the belief that the evolutionary approach can be seen as "a generic framework for understanding social change" (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. xi). It is focused on how behaviour becomes dominant through a process of variation, selection, retention and struggle; can be applied at different levels of analysis; and is flexible enough to accommodate other perspectives, with the organisational learning approach being the most compatible with its logic. We will argue that an evolutionary approach to SSR can make the reform process more democratic, and lead to transformations that are locally-owned and sustainable.

Using the cases of SSR in Sierra-Leone and Iraq as examples, we will argue that the evolutionary approach to SSR can and does work in practice. Whilst by definition it cannot provide a single, universally applicable, model, or a ready-made solution for a particular security sector, it can serve as an overall framework enabling the generation of a number of alternative models, selection of the most appropriate ones, and replication of those that have proved to be successful.

We separate this paper into two distinct parts. Part 1 gives an overview of theoretical approaches to institutional change and argues that the evolutionary approach is the best for understanding and managing SSR. It will be of most interest to SSR theorists. Part 2 tests these arguments against experience in Sierra Leone and Iraq and discusses how the evolutionary approach can be implemented in practice. We hope this part will begin to translate theory into action. We include in an Annex a description of other approaches to institutional reform, in the hope that this will prompt greater cross-fertilisation between economics, business strategy and security sector reform.

This paper gives a more theoretical treatment of a concept first outlined in "Security Sector Evolution: Which Locals, Ownership of What?" (Martin and Wilson, 2008) and should be read in conjunction with it.

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[1] For an overview of some other approaches to strategic management see Annex 1.

PART 1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

SSR has traditionally been dominated by a rationalist approach, which makes many deep (and often unacknowledged) assumptions about the world, and our capacity to understand and influence it. This approach underpins a number of schools of strategic management. In this overview, we will focus on the design and planning schools as examples of the strengths and weaknesses of the rationalist approach, before introducing alternative, non-rationalist approaches.

Much of the work on theories of institutional change has been done in the context of designing strategy for Western private sector institutions, and we will repeatedly make analogies between strategy in the private sector and reform in the public sector. Both involve design and implementation of institutional change. And although the purpose and operating context of private and public sector organisations are clearly different, these differences in general strengthen our argument. A Western corporation tends to have a clearly-defined role and a narrow range of objectives (almost entirely profit-maximisation) in reasonably stable political and economic environments. The rationalist school has nevertheless been criticised for under-estimating the complexity facing such institutions. We will argue that such concerns should apply even more strongly when trying to apply a rationalist approach to reform of public sector institutions in developing or post-conflict countries, operating in unpredictable contexts and aiming to meet a wide range of politically-contested objectives.

Examples of the rationalist approach: the design school and the planning school

- The design school understands the purpose of strategy-making as achieving a fit between the internal capabilities of an organization and the external possibilities (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 24). According to Mintzberg et al. (1998), this school makes a number of assumptions about strategy formation, including the following:
- it is a deliberate process of conscious thought;
- the responsibility for it lies with the leadership (so, as we can see, organisational change is a top-down process);
- the design is complete once the strategy is fully formulated, and only when strategies are fully formulated can they be implemented;
- strategies should be explicit.

Even a brief outline of some of the main assumptions of this school allows us to identify a number a problems. Firstly, the process of strategy formation is understood as a process of conception, which, according to Mintzberg et al. is inherently problematic, as every strategic change has a certain unpredictability and carries with it a degree of risk, and no organisation can decide with full certainty and in advance which of its attributes can be regarded as strengths and which as weaknesses. Secondly, explicit strategies promote inflexibility; they become embedded and may well impede change when it is necessary. Thirdly, this school supports the division between planning and implementation, and, consequently, separates thinkers from doers. Furthermore, thinkers come from the top of an organization. Such a separation between formulation and implementation is unhelpful and is informed by a rationalist worldview according to which the world around us can be fully

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understood, predicted and, therefore, managed. It does not allow for the unknown (complexity) and is not well suited to account for instability (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

Its weaknesses notwithstanding, the design school can provide valuable insights in a number of circumstances. For instance, Mintzberg et al. (1998 p. 43) suggest that sometimes organisations do need "grand designs", and a leader may well be capable of handling the task him/herself provided the situation is relatively straightforward. The model can also be workable if the environment is relatively stable. In fact, it seems to work best at the point when an organisation is moving from a period of changing circumstances to that of stability. Finally, where this model can be really useful, and even indispensable, is within a new organisation, as it is perfectly suited for the period of "initial conception of strategy" (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 44).

Another example of the rationalist approach comes from the planning school. As the name suggests, the planning school is preoccupied with planning done by experts within a specialised department. Its proponents focus on developing procedures for identifying and, ideally, quantifying the goals of the organisation, making forecasts about the environment and developing extensive checklists (Mintzberg et al., 1998). As a result, a number of plans are designed (long-term, medium-term, short-term, etc.), with them all brought together by the "master plan". Planning is seen as fundamentally important, which is being reflected in the fact that "plan to plan" becomes a dominant activity, carried out at all levels of an organisation overseen by a specially designated planning department.

The model this school offers is quite similar to that of the design school; however, the rather informal process within the design school becomes highly formalized in the planning school. The overall approach becomes more technical and comprehensive, with a lot of attention to detail, and planners, not leaders, become responsible for the process in practice (Mintzberg et al., 1998). The planning school has attracted a number of criticisms over its inflexibility and overreliance on the ability to predict and control the environment; its detached nature (strategy formation is done by planners who abstract themselves from the day-to-day reality of the organisation, and the process is still top-down); and excessive formalisation and resulting inflexibility (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

This is not to suggest that the planning school has nothing to offer; after all, planning is an essential and necessary activity for any organization. Planning, however, is not always suited for strategic management. In this respect, Mintzberg et al. (1998) suggest that an organisation should appreciate the different roles that planners can take on and distinguish between more formalised and more flexible, or creative, planners, with the former being less suited for stable environments and the latter for more dynamic. A number of recent developments within the planning school also deserve a mention. For instance, scenario planning, based on the idea that by speculating on a variety of possible scenarios an organisation can be better prepared for a range of important contingencies (Mintzberg et al., 1998), is widely applied in organisations operating in the field of emergency preparedness and response. Its obvious limitations notwithstanding, this model can (and does in practice) result in a better ability of organisations to establish structures and develop procedures which allow for more effective and efficient action and coordination of efforts in the face of an accident or emergency. However, regular tests (or exercises) are absolutely essential for this kind of planning to be fruitful.

The evolutionary approach[2]

The evolutionary approach has been taken up by scholars from various academic disciplines, particularly economics and strategic management, to address the weaknesses of rationalist approaches. As Aldrich and Ruff (2006) suggest, this approach can serve as a general framework for understanding social change, given that general processes of variation, selection and retention are omnipresent. However, since the actual drivers behind the processes of variation, selection and retention vary, the evolutionary approach is capable of incorporating insights offered by other perspectives.

In their ground-breaking work, Nelson and Winter (1982) suggested that a process similar to 'natural selection' operates in the economic environment. This process operates on all types of change – both evolutionary (long-term, progressive) and revolutionary, both 'blind' and 'deliberate'. According to Nelson and Winter (1982), the process of natural selection operates at the level of 'routines' – persistent features of organisations that determine their behaviour and play a role similar to that of 'genes' in biology – and results in more successful routines being selected and augmented over time, as organisations 'possessing' these routines tend to do better than others.

Nelson and Winter suggested that existing parallels between individual and organisational behaviour enable us to consider organisational routines as analogous to individual skills. They define a 'skill' as "a capability for a smooth sequence of coordinated behaviour that is ordinarily effective relative to its objective given the context in which it normally occurs" (Nelson and Winter, 1982 p. 73). Skills are varied, but they all share the following important characteristics:

- they are program-like;
- they are based on knowledge that is largely tacit; and
- 'choices' made while exercising a skill are to a considerable degree automatic.

A set of skills that an individual possesses, or a set of routines of an organisation, form their respective repertoires. Routines play a number of important functions. Firstly, they serve as an organisational memory. Secondly, routines impose a certain truce among members of an organisation. In other words, in the organisation's control mechanisms are routinised, and most of them are aimed at preventing conflicts from taking a particular disruptive turn. So, while conflicts happen, routines ensure that they stay within acceptable bounds. Thirdly, a routine may represent a target. Even though organisations find it easier to follow a routine than changing it, the adherence to organisational routines should still be controlled, which can involve selection

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[2]According to Mintzberg et al. (1998), the evolutionary theory can be considered as one of the most important strands of the learning school. In this paper, however, we are taking a broader perspective and are following Aldrich and Ruff (2006) who see the evolutionary theory as a metatheory, not just capable of accommodating other approaches, but depending on them for their ideas. These authors explain this proposition in the following way: "The evolutionary approach constitutes a set of concatenated principles and uses multiple approaches to explain particular kinds of change. Evolutionary models are not causal, because they do not specify the engines driving variation, selection, and retention. Instead, the models are algorithmic, specifying that *if* certain conditions are met, then a particular outcome will occur. In explaining any particular evolutionary *if-then* path, a theorist may be obliged to draw upon ideas from several approaches" (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 pp. 34-35; *original emphasis*).

(from a number of routines), modification (adjustment to ensure the requirements of the routine are met), monitoring (to detect problems) and adaptation (of the routine itself) (Nelson and Winter, 1982).

Although routine and innovation are normally counterpoised, Nelson and Winter draw attention to the interplay between them. For instance, an innovation can originate from the puzzles or anomalies that relate to existing routines particularly as surrounding circumstances change and the routine becomes less beneficial to the organisation. Furthermore, innovation often involves new combinations of elements of existing routines. Importantly, this path of innovation is usually based on a trial-and-error search when "obstacles to effective performance are detected, diagnosed and solved" (Nelson and Winter, 1982 p. 131). In addition, arrangements for encouraging and producing innovations can themselves be routinised therefore defying the split between them.

The role of the 'selection environment' is not only to determine the way in which the use of different technologies changes over time, but also to provide feedback that firms will use to decide what kinds of research and development are profitable to undertake. In other words, the selection environment represents a set of considerations that determine the success of an organisation and therefore also determine whether the organisation will survive or fail, and probably expand or contract. However, for an innovation to survive, it needs to be viewed as worthwhile, and this decision depends not just on the objectives of the firm, but also on the monitoring mechanisms which rate innovations in accordance to the objectives. A profitable innovation can then spread by substitution (within a firm that introduced the innovation) or imitation (among different firms in one sector) (Nelson and Winter, 1982).

Nelson and Winter also provided some specific insights regarding the non-market environment. In particular, one of the distinguishing features of the non-market sector is that interests of 'service providers' and 'customers' are more difficult to define and to separate from one another than is the case under market conditions. Furthermore, in non-market environments profitability plays a much more modest role in decision-making, and so does competition, which gives a public entity more freedom as its actions are not especially constrained by the power of its 'customers' (Nelson and Winter, 1982). These and other features have an impact on the processes of innovation and selection. For instance, the presence of, and the need to consult with, multiple actors all of whom have a role in delivery in the non-market sector often means that many different agencies need to agree with or give their approval to an innovation for it to become operational. The diffusion of innovation is not driven by competition, but becomes more of a matter of "internal decision-making constrained and pressured by (…) political processes" (Nelson and Winter, 1982 p. 270). Also, in the absence of competition, and therefore incentives to protect innovations, imitation is more widespread and often encouraged and facilitated. All these differences notwithstanding, the authors believe that the evolutionary model is still applicable to the non-market sector. Thus, they suggest that the understanding of an organisational memory as embedded in routines is as applicable to public sector organisations as it is to the private sector. Also, an evolutionary model does not regard prices and markets as the only information-transmitting mechanisms. Furthermore, the fact that "the process of institutional development is an evolutionary process" becomes clear if we consider the larger social system as a whole (Nelson and Winter, 1982 pp. 403-404).

The belief that evolutionary theory and the theory of complex adaptive systems can provide a new perspective on the central questions of economics informs The origin of wealth: evolution, complexity, and the radical remaking of economics by Beinhocker (2007). He argues that wealth creation is a result of an evolutionary process of differentiation, selection and amplification. In fact for Beinhocker it is misleading to imagine that

evolution is primarily a biological concept which can be applied by analogy to economics: rather, both systems are evolutionary systems in their own right (indeed, when Charles Darwin was developing his theory of biological evolution he was arguably influenced by Adam Smith's work on how economic systems can produce beneficial results without direction (Coase, 1985)). Evolution operates in the following way:

Evolution creates designs, or more appropriately, discovers designs, through a process of trial and error. A variety of candidate designs are created and tried out in the environment; designs that are successful are retained, replicated and built upon, while those that are unsuccessful are discarded. Through repetition, the process creates designs that are fit for their particular purpose and environment. If the conditions are right, competition between designs for finite resources drives the emergence of greater structure and complexity over time, as evolution builds on the successes of the past to create novel designs for the future (Beinhocker, 2007 p. 14).

Economic evolution involves three interconnected processes: evolution of physical technology; evolution of social technology; and evolution of business designs. Being an evolutionary system, the economy is also a complex adaptive system. The main idea underpinning this suggestion is that economies "are collections of people interacting with each other in complex ways, processing information, and adapting their behaviors" (Beinhocker, 2007 p. 19).

One of the principal criticisms that Beinhocker makes of traditional economics is that it simplifies human behavior by presenting people as perfectly rational, capable of accurate predictions and complex calculations. These simplifications also imply that people operate in a simple and predictable world. Finally, traditional economics disregards time by assuming that the economy moves from one equilibrium to another and that these periods of transition do not matter. In reality, however, people are not perfectly rational, they do not do well at complex calculations, they make mistakes and have biases that influence their decisions, and they often settle for 'good enough' instead of looking for absolute best. At the same time, what people are good at is pattern recognition, interpretation of ambiguities, and learning. Their worlds are incredibly complex, and time plays an important role in the dynamics of the economy (Beinhocker, 2007).

One of the most important implications of the evolutionary approach is that, even though it is impossible to predict or direct evolution, what we can and should do is enable our institutions to be better 'evolvers' (Beinhocker, 2007). This approach to strategy departs from traditional goal setting and devising a plan to achieve them, and instead focuses on 'bringing the evolution in' through a portfolio of experiments (a population of competing plans) that evolves over time (Beinhocker, 2007 p. 334).

In order to make this approach operational, an organisation needs to take the following steps:

- set a context for strategy (i.e. collective understanding of the situation and shared aspirations for the organisation – which requires 'prepared' minds);
- establish a process of 'differentiation' of plans (which requires tolerating experimentation);
- create a 'selection' environment within an organisation; and
- introduce processes through which successful plans will be 'amplified while unsuccessful ones will be discarded (to include monitoring and feedback mechanisms and necessary resources)' (Beinhocker, 2007 pp. 337, 340, 345-347).

Importantly, the evolutionary approach is more descriptive than prescriptive, i.e. it helps us to understand how things happen rather than provide a 'recipe' of success; after all, evolution does not necessarily result in progress, and so the above steps are no guarantee of it either. Aldrich and Ruff (2006) also make it explicit that equating evolution with progress is a misunderstanding. They follow Campbell in suggesting that "[e]volution results from the operation of four generic processes: variation, selection, retention, and the struggle over scarce resources" (Campbell quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 16). These processes are both necessary and sufficient for evolution to occur; they are equally applicable to social and biological systems and can be presented in the following way (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 pp. 16-17):

Evolutionary Process	Definition	Example
Variation	Change from current routines and competences; change in organizational forms Intentional: occurs when people actively attempt to generate alternatives and seek solutions to problems Blind: occurs independently of conscious planning	Within organizations: problemistic search Between organizations: founding of new organization by outsiders to an industry Mistakes, misunderstandings, surprises, and idle curiosity
Selection	Differential elimination of certain types of variations External selection: forces external to an organization that affect its routines and competencies Internal selection: forces internal to an organization that affect its routines and competencies	Market forces, competitive pressures, and conformity to institutionalized forms Pressures towards stability and homogeneity, and the persistence of past selection criteria that are no longer relevant in a new environment
Retention	Selected variations are preserved, duplicated, or otherwise reproduced	Within organizations: specialization and standardization of roles that limit discretion Between organizations: institutionalization of practices in cultural beliefs and values

Struggle	Contest to obtain scarce resources	Struggle over capital or legitimacy

Importantly, the above framework encompasses not only both intentional and blind variation (in line with what was suggested by Nelson and Winter), but also variation occurring at different levels: within an organisation and at the level of the population of organisations. It should also be remembered, that, given that selection operates on the consequences and not intentions of behaviours, blind variation can be as effective as intentional ones (Langton quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 18). So, what drives variation within an organisation? Within an organisation, sources of intentional variation can range from formal programs of experimentation and imitation to encouragement of unfocused variation (Minter quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 18). Some organisations choose to induce exploratory variation, and some will even go as far as promoting intelligent failure as a method of experimentation. At the same time, variations can be intentionally suppressed, as, for instance, dominant groups may be interested in preserving the status quo (Pfeffer and Salancik quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 19).

As for blind variation, it can result from anything from trial-and-error experimentation to idle curiosity and reactions to unexpected external shocks (Meyer quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 19). While some suggest that most variations within organisations are not blind (Corning quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 20), others are more realistic and suggest that not only are both intentional and blind variation equally possible, but that they are also inseparable, and most processes within an organisation have both intentional and blind elements to them (Nelson and Winter, 1982; Mintzberg, et al., 1998).

Variations at the population level can be introduced through an entry of a new organization or a new population of organisations. Although new organisations will usually try to replicate existing organizations that are perceived as successful, complete imitation will be impossible, and all deviations will introduce new blind variations which can prove fruitful or fatal (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 20). Some organisations are established with a view to departing from the existing organisational forms, and, if successful, they can radically change the conditions for all other organisations in a population (Tushman and Anderson quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 20). Just as within an organisation, variation can be discouraged at the population level, for instance, by organizations that have vested interests in the existing arrangements (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006).

The evolutionary framework offered by Aldrich and Ruff allows for other selection mechanisms than that of the market, and, therefore, further develops Nelson and Winter's insight on the overall applicability of the selection processes to non-market sectors. They suggest, however, that, just like variation, selection also occurs at different levels. Within an organisation, many systems may be selective, and importantly, not all of them improve fitness (something Beinhocker would have difficulty accepting). According to Aldrich and Ruff (2006 p. 21),

(…) an evolutionary approach alerts us to the possibility that many selection systems are irrelevant or not tightly connected to environmental fitness. These systems preserve organizational diversity that is not tied to current environmental conditions. Organizations that are somewhat protected from their environments may even move away from external relevance (…).

The reason for this irrelevance could be anything from the drive for internal stability and cohesion to outdated selection criteria and/or the financial and human costs of change. Overall, at the level of population, maladaptive organisations tend to decline, and, over time, populations are characterised by the attributes of those organisations that survived (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006). It has also been demonstrated that strong selection pressures often result in similarities between organisations (Zimmer and Aldrich quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 22).

The retention mechanism is crucial in ensuring that selected variations are maintained and occurs when "variations are preserved, duplicated, or otherwise reproduced" (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 23). Retention processes allow organisations to benefit from routines that have proved – or have been interpreted as – successful (Miner quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006). Just like other evolutionary processes, retention occurs within organisations and at the level of population, and, just like any other evolutionary process, it is imperfect, as not everything is retained (for instance, within an organisation due to human error, and at the level of population due to rigid organisational boundaries, and at both levels - due to inability to capture tacit knowledge). At the level of population, retention is operationalised through replication; organisations with strong linkages are more successful at facilitating the diffusion of variations (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 24).

Finally, "[u]nderlying selection pressures and the search for effective variations lies the scarcity of resources within organizations, between organizations, and between populations" (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 25). Struggle for limited resources occurs at all levels, and they may include not just financial, but also human and symbolic resources.

Having introduced the overarching evolutionary framework with its processes of variation, selection, retention and struggle for resources, we are turning to the organisational learning and institutional approaches for further insights regarding organisational stability and change.

The organisational learning approach

According to Aldrich and Ruff (2006 p. 50), this approach is "particularly well-suited for explaining organizational evolution". The organisational learning approach clearly departs from the strictly rationalist approach to suggest that strategies are not formulated and then implemented, but rather that they emerge as people learn about the situation and the ways in which a particular organisation can deal with it. With the focus on how strategies form and work, this approach is descriptive, not prescriptive, and it does not reflect the thinking-acting dichotomy (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

According to the organisational learning approach, strategies emerge from a variety of actions and decisions at all levels of the organisation, the cumulative effect of which often produces a change in direction over time. It follows from this that any informed individual within the organisation contributes to the process of strategy formation and inaction (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 178). Consequently, bottom-up processes of change are important. It has been suggested that change is often 'championed' not by the chief executives and senior management, but by the middle level managers who provide a drive for strategic initiatives that emerge deep in the hierarchy and seek the approval of senior executives (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

According to Levitt and March (1988), organisational learning is routine-based, history-dependent, and target-oriented. Organisations learn by incorporating lessons from past experience into routines that guide behaviour. Organisations also learn from each other through the diffusion of experience and routines. Routines change through trial-and-error experimentation and through organisational search. For both processes, previous experience matters, as a routine is more likely to be chosen if it is associated with success, than with failure (Cyert and March quoted in Levitt and March, 1988 p. 321), and the choice of alternatives, intensity and direction of search depend on the history of success or failure of the organisation (Radner quoted in Levitt and March, 1988 p. 321). Importantly, routines are not fixed, and they are themselves transformed in the process of organisational learning, which, in turn, affects their further usage.

The process of learning is not perfect, and the so-called competency traps, where favourable experience with an inferior procedure results in an organisation focusing on it to the exclusion of a superior one, are common (Levitt and March, 1988). In addition, individual judgement is not perfect either, and people often favour more recent or salient experience, or misinterpret experience as successful in terms of the outcomes achieved even when the shortfall is significant (Staw and Ross quoted in Levitt and March, 1988 p. 325). Furthermore, not everything is recorded in the process of experience accumulation – internal consistency of organisational memories is relative, and while experience transfer is often unproblematic, not all experience is preserved. Finally, not all routines are equally likely to be recalled at a particular time; the most frequently used, the most recent ones and the most easily available are much more likely to be chosen (Levitt and March, 1988).

The ideas of the organisational learning approach have informed a lot of research on the 'learning organisation'. It has been suggested that learning should be understood as happening at individual, group and organisational levels, with each of them informing the other: "Organizational learning is the process of change in individual and shared thought and action, which is affected by and embedded in the institutions of the organization" (Crossan et al., 1997 quoted in Mintzberg et al. 1998, p. 212). Lampel (quoted in Mintzberg et al., 1998 pp. 214-215) outlined the following features of the learning organisation:

- it can learn from failure as well as from success;
- it strives to constantly improve ways of doing things;
- it assumes that those closest to particular processes in the organization know best and that their knowledge should be mobilized and shared;
- it strives to transfer knowledge from some parts to others by encouraging informal interactions and gatherings; and
- it devotes time and effort to looking for knowledge outside its own boundaries.

Learning is undoubtedly important for any organization, and for some (or under certain circumstances) it becomes crucial. Mintzberg et al. (1998) suggest that, for obvious reasons, learning is of particular concern to professional organisations operating in highly complex environments; for organisations finding themselves in a completely novel situation; and for organisations whose environments are unstable and unpredictable by nature. What is important for our purposes is that learning organisations are better evolvers.

Theoretical approaches – conclusions

The above overview of various approaches to institutional change is selective and by no means exhaustive. We have argued for the centrality of the evolutionary approach with its focus on the processes of variation, selection and retention, in understanding institutional change. Importantly, these processes take place at different levels, both within organisations and at the level of population. We have also demonstrated that not only is the evolutionary approach compatible with other approaches, in particular the organisational learning approach, but it depends on their insights regarding the drivers of evolutionary processes (for the organisational learning approach, these include trial-and-error experimentation and organisational search). The organisational learning approach alerts us, inter alia, to the importance of tacit knowledge and the imperfections of the learning processes. In what follows we intend to consider the implications of the above insights when applied to SSR. In doing so, we will be drawing on the experiences of SSR in Sierra-Leone and Iraq.

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PART 2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE EVOLUTIONARY AND OTHER COMPATIBLE APPROACHES

> Operationally, (…) [security sector reform] cannot only involve a destination.
> Rather it is the process and route that are all important.
> (Chanaa, 2002 p. 75)

> [Security sector reform] is not a single process with a generic blueprint; rather it must be an organic process that
> grows out of each country's particular circumstances
> (Chuter quoted in A Beginner's Guide to Security Sector Reform, 2007)

Why is a new approach necessary?

Fashionable talk about SSR 'from below' notwithstanding, in practice little progress has been made towards this (Chanaa, 2002 p. 9). One of the main reasons for this is the reluctance of donors to abandon a top-down and rationalistic approach to reform, in which the reform process is seen as a project or a programme which entails defining, at the start, a desired outcome and then working towards it (Martin and Wilson, 2008 p. 87). This approach follows the design and planning schools in divorcing thinking from doing, and is based on the assumption that the whole process can be easily sequenced, and the result of each single activity can be defined at the planning stage. It is also based on the "[erroneous] belief that with enough knowledge of the structural and cultural contexts of operations, and of the actors involved and their preferences, one can apply the correct actions and activities and thereby produce specific pre-defined outcomes" (Egnell and Halden, 2009 p. 47). However, in practice, long-term social processes cannot be predicted with certainty (Egnell and Halden, 2009), and sufficient knowledge of them is unlikely to be available to external reformers, given that lack of local knowledge is produced by inherent factors of post-conflict or post-transition interventions, including lack of time, false expertise, complexity and size (Baylis, 2008). These considerations clearly point to the objections normally associated with the design and planning schools which we have already considered.

However, one of the most important implications for SSR of a rationalist approach is that a reform programme is designed precisely at the moment when local capacity to contribute is at its weakest, which makes the process inherently undemocratic (Martin and Wilson, 2008). In addition, such an approach inevitably underestimates the local context and its complexities by prioritising the institutional characteristics that the external reformers wish to introduce over those already present in the recipients' societies (Chanaa, 2002; Nathan, 2004), which has further impact both on local ownership and the related issue of sustainability. As Egnell and Halden (2009 p. 32) point out,

The very norms of SSR challenge the leadership and power structures that current governments rest upon. This creates a problematic paradox as one of the more important principles of SSR, not least in terms of successful implementation, is that of local ownership of the reform process.

While such an approach is convenient for donors as it allows for programme outsourcing and easy measuring of progress, it clearly conflicts with the whole idea of local ownership and sustainability of reform efforts (Martin and Wilson, 2008). It is understandable that this approach fits well with the way donor governments function and enables them to meet the requirements of accountability to the taxpayer for the money spent on assistance and development programmes. However, if we are to make a difference with respect to SSR, this approach must change.

These criticisms are not new, and it has already been argued that "[t]he international community should avoid the assumption that Northern models can be replicated easily or, indeed, that these models are appropriate in every respect to societies elsewhere" (Nathan, 2004 p. 33), and that "[w]hatever the intentions of external assistance, experience has shown that security will be determined largely by the society itself" (Chanaa, 2002 p. 76), and, therefore, "more attention should be given to existing structures of state, society and polity" (Egnell and Halden, 2009). However, not enough has been done so far to show how these widely accepted principles can be realised in practice.

An evolutionary approach to SSR can meet some of these criticisms and make the whole process more democratic, leading to transformations that are locally-owned and more sustainable. The evolutionary approach will see SSR replaced with security sector evolution, where the security sector changes not as the result of a stand-alone reform project but because security agencies have the long-term capability and incentives to change in response to signals from society (Martin and Wilson, 2008).

This approach will mean that, instead of attempting to design a 'better' security sector, practitioners will be influencing its evolution. In doing so, they will focus on improving the capacity of security actors to respond to the needs of their people (Martin and Wilson, 2008), (in contrast, at the moment even needs-assessments are rarely carried out to inform reform efforts (Brzoska, 2006)). This approach will also help take into account existing alternative security traditions and local reform initiatives, which is crucial if reform efforts are to succeed (Chanaa, 2002). At the same time, it will require a guaranteed long-term external commitment, as a reliance on quick fixes is incompatible with the evolutionary approach with its focus on long-term capacity building. Furthermore, donors will have to be prepared to accept a much higher degree of uncertainty and unpredictability with respect to reform efforts, and agree to put more trust into practitioners on the ground. Finally, they will have to lower their expectations with respect to what can be realistically achieved, which could be something much more modest than establishing a fully functioning and democratically accountable security sector (importantly, this has already been suggested on a number of occasions, with no relation to the evolutionary approach; see, for instance, Law, 2006; Brzoska, 2006; Jackson, 2008, interview; Baylis, 2008; Egnell and Halden, 2009)). As Brzoska (2006 p. 6) puts it,

Security sector reconstruction and reform programmes should be clear about their limitations with regard to reaching goals that can result only from a decade-long evolution of democratic practice, such as solid trust between the population and security institutions.

These implications notwithstanding, we believe that the evolutionary approach is worthwhile and has the potential to be more effective than the strictly rationalist one, and we will now consider some of its practical implications before offering some examples of its implementation.

What does the evolutionary approach look like when applied to SSR?

As we have seen, evolution in the social world, just like in the natural world, operates through four processes: variation, selection, retention and struggle for limited resources (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006). Although it is impossible to predict or direct it, what we can do is enable institutions to become better 'evolvers' (Beinhocker, 2006). To do so, as Beinhocker suggests, would involve introducing evolution through a portfolio of competing strategies that themselves evolve over time. This would include: setting the stimulating context, in which variation is encouraged; creating a selection environment whereby strategies can be tried out; and ensuring the retention of the most successful ones with the use of monitoring and feedback mechanisms (Beinhocker, 2006). This will entail a different approach to decision-making, one capable of taking into account the complexity of the environment in which organisations of today, including security organisations, find themselves. As Snowden and Boone (2007) argue, traditional command-and-control styles do not work particularly well in complex environments (the realm of unknown unknowns), of which post-conflict countries are a good example. This is because the 'right' answers to the challenges posed by such environments are not visible from the outset, and in many case even the nature of the problems eludes definition. What is more appropriate in complex environments is encouraging experimentation and waiting for instructive patterns to emerge, and, therefore, the course of action should be "probe first, then sense, then respond" (Snowden and Boone, 2007 p. 5). In practice, this course of action will encourage interactive communication through opening up discussions in which innovative ideas can be generated (e.g. large group methods). It will also be tolerant to dissent and diversity, and even encourage it through having a number of groups/teams working on the same problem in parallel (Snowden and Boone, 2007). Importantly, this bottom-up approach will be attentive to local reform initiatives, and will make both intentional (e.g. problemistic search and trial-and-error experimentation) and blind variation (e.g. mistakes, surprises, etc.) more likely (see Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 for more examples of the two). It is also in line with the concept of the learning organisation which learns from both failures and successes, values opinion of those closest to particular processes, and encourages knowledge transfer (Lampel quoted in Mintzberg et al., 1998). However, for this approach to work, employees at all levels of an organisation must have not just a 'prepared' mind (Beinhocker, 2006), but also the necessary knowledge and skills, which makes training and retraining indispensable.

As for selection, some of the tools suggested by Snowden and Boone can serve as selection mechanisms inside an organisation. These include set barriers that will limit or delineate behaviour, as well as ways to manage the starting conditions and monitor for emergence (Snowden and Boone, 2007). Setting such barriers is quite different from setting targets and outcomes of particular activities; instead of desired outcomes, these barriers constitute a set of loosely defined rules that, while reflecting the overall goals of an organisation, are designed to guide search processes, not deliver pre-determined results. Snowden and Boone (2007) also suggest stimulating attractors as a useful selection mechanism. They define attractors as "phenomena that arise when small stimuli and probes (…) resonate with people" (Snowden and Boone, 2007 p. 6). This method seems very promising and it can offer a rather objective, and therefore reliable, feedback as a selection criterion, but it does require very well established communication channels.

In addition to internal selection mechanisms, external forces are just as important, if not more so (for more on the role of both internal and external selection forces see Aldrich and Ruff, 2006). One might suggest that the closer internal selection mirrors external selection, the greater the chance that an organisation will survive.

However, as it is not always possible to know for certain and in advance what the external selection criteria are or will be (which is especially the case in the market environment), the importance of having a set of alternative strategies, a readiness to experiment and an ability to retain successful routines, provide an obvious advantage.

In Nelson and Winter's (1982) terms, the selection environment represents a set of considerations that determine the success of an organisation. In other words, it can be any mechanism that can provide feedback to an organisation regarding its performance. This means that the selection environment does not have to be represented by the market, as markets and prices are not the only information-transmitting mechanisms (Nelson and Winter, 1982). Non-market competitive pressures are clearly important for security institutions, as competition between security providers is a common feature of conflict or post-conflict environments.

In conflict or post-conflict environments there is a competition for the provision of security by different forces. One can talk about Hamas, Hezbollah, the Taliban and other entities as security providers. At the moment, for instance, the Taliban can be said to be the most effective security provider in southern Afghanistan. So, people can choose among different entities who position themselves differently (Martin, 2008, interview).

This is further supported by the following observation:

Non-state providers of security (and justice) operate widely in Afghanistan and have always been greater in number and geographical spread than the state police. Some are militia, other part of the tribal system of non-state justice – Pushtanwalli. But the Taliban also operate a form on non-state policing and justice, and sometimes do this effectively, if with unpleasant consequences. The punishments are often disproportionate to the crime; however the system is quick, cheap and sustainable. This makes it challenging in competition terms

(Biesheuvel, 2009, interview)

These insights point to the fact that it is the security concerns of ordinary people that are of paramount importance, as organisations capable of meeting their needs are more likely to succeed. It also follows that knowing what those needs are is the key, and that security provision is information-dependent. For these needs to be known, the public must have an ability to articulate them. The security providers, in their turn, must listen and respond to them (Martin and Wilson, 2008).

A non-market selection environment also encompasses formal and informal constraints, and while state security institutions may have an ability to change formal constraints (laws and regulations), they have much less degree of control over informal ones, which, as North (1990) suggests are pervasive, culture-specific and much more resistant to deliberate change. These constraints act as selection forces, and only reform strategies that take them into account are likely to be sustainable. The knowledge of these constraints, which include local customs and traditions, is something that traditional approach to SSR tends to disregard. The evolutionary and the institutional approaches, on the contrary, not only accommodate these constraints, but, in fact, support furthering our knowledge of them.

As for retention mechanisms, they ensure that routines which have proved – or are perceived – to be successful, are reproduced (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006). The organisational learning approach alerts us to the fact that the retention processes are imperfect, as not everything is recorded in the process of experience accumulation and the resulting internal consistency of organisational memories is relative. Furthermore, not all routines are

equally likely to be recalled at a particular time; the most frequently used, the most recent ones and the most easily available are much more likely to be chosen (Levitt and March, 1988). What is needed then is "developing the organizational capabilities to acquire, create, accumulate, and exploit knowledge" (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995 quoted in Mintzberg et al., 1998 pp. 211-212).

Finally, for security providers the struggle over limited resources would entail not just the struggle over financial resources, important as they are, but also the struggle over human resources and legitimacy. While the struggle over financial resources takes place between various state security institutions, as well as between the branches of the same institution, the struggle over human resources extends beyond government structures, and the struggle over legitimacy in conflict and post-conflict environment takes place almost exclusively between state and non-state security providers. The stakes in the struggle over legitimacy are high, so the ability to know what people's expectations are in terms of security, and to meet these expectations, plays a decisive role in determining not just the success of a particular institution, but the viability of the state security sector as a whole. All too often in conflict and immediately post-conflict environments, politics become what they were in Iraq – "a red-blooded struggle for survival and supremacy" (Rathmell, 2007 p. 9).

Having considered the need for a new approach and some of its implications, we are now turning to two case studies for some empirical evidence of its applicability.

Has the evolutionary approach ever worked in SSR?

Sierra-Leone

Security is everyone's business
(Hanson-Alp, 2008)

The example of Sierra Leone is especially instructive for our purposes, as this country experienced the first SSR, or, rather, there was no well-developed concept of SSR before Sierra Leone. It is often seen as the example of SSR, as "it was there, in the Sierra Leone, where the concept of SSR was born and developed" (Jackson and Albrecht, 2008; Jackson, 2008, interview). This section is based mostly on the first comprehensive study of the country's reform process presented in Security System Transformation in Sierra Leone, 1997-2007 (Albrecht and Jackson, 2009) and a series of papers that accompanied it. Importantly, one of the conclusions made by the study relates to SSR programming and suggests the need for the evolutionary approach. It is worth quoting at some length:

The question that Sierra Leone asks today is how far can one actually plan a series of policies that are based in part on the activities on the ground in response to immediate needs, activities that are, by definition, in a constant state of flux?

This question, in turn, raises a number of questions about SSR programming in general and how far SSR can indeed be programmed into the future. While there is a clear set of activities and principles within SSR, this does not amount to a plan per se. These principles and activities are more like a series of guidelines or a 'direction of travel'. Whilst this may be an important issue in itself, it does not lend itself to development planning in the

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sense of neat three-year project cycles. The experience of Sierra Leone, where transformation rather than reform was taking place, shows that SSR is governed by context and entry points and is, above all, an evolutionary process guided by individuals (Jackson and Albrecht 2008; emphasis added).

In the early 1990s, when the decision was made in the UK that something had to be done to assist Sierra Leone, there was little understanding as to what exactly had to be done (Jackson, 2008, interview). Given that the country lacked virtually all governance tools and infrastructure, getting something up and running to avoid a power vacuum was a matter of urgency which did not allow time for formal planning (Jackson and Albrecht, 2008). In fact, overall, when SSR takes pace immediately post-conflict, there is usually no time to gather information and engage in careful planning (Jackson, 2008, interview). Luckily, the right people were sent to Sierra Leone; professionals, who, while not very familiar with project management and developing logical frameworks, had a lot of operational experience in the field (Jackson, 2008, interview; Jackson and Albrecht, 2008). Some of them commented that, once they got some understanding of the situation on the ground, they realised that what they had been told to do was exactly what they had to avoid doing (Jackson, 2008, interview). Ashington-Pickett (2008) gives a very interesting list of prior assumptions held by one of the UK Intelligence and Security Advisors with respect to intelligence sector reform, all which proved to be flawed. These include the ideas that "[n]ational security and intelligence organisations are inherently undemocratic, unaccountable and not transparent"; and "there is therefore a conflict between increasing effectiveness and increasing accountability and transparency", which were especially damaging for the reform efforts; that "[s]uccess would be achieved by creating a scaled down replica of the UK intelligence machinery"; and that "SSR was a technical development activity and did not possess any substantial political dimension" (Ashington-Pickett, 2008). Luckily, professionals on the ground managed to overcome "a perception pressure [that] if it doesn't look like the UK, it is a failure" (Albrecht and Jackson, 2009 p. 179). As a result, "security-related programming in Sierra Leone became a response to immediate needs" (Jackson and Albrecht, 2008); in other words, it evolved in response to the situation on the ground.

A number of specific elements of the evolutionary approach can be found in the SSR process in Sierra-Leone. For instance, a network of security committees at the provincial (PROSECs) and district level (DISECs) was established bringing together security officials and representatives of civil society, and establishing channels of communication with the Office of National Security (Martin and Wilson, 2008). This move "was considered important in extending the national security coordination function beyond the central government in Freetown and involving the entire country in national security governance" (Ashington-Pickett, 2008). The resulting security architecture provided opportunities for civil society involvement, with the local security committees serving as early warning mechanisms at the community level (Hanson-Alp, 2008). This architecture improved both the ability of the public to make its needs known and the ability of the security providers to take those needs into account in formulating security policies.

In addition, initiatives like local needs policing were very important to secure the participation of local communities. This policing concept was adapted to the local circumstances, and discussed and jointly designed with local counterparts (Jackson, 2008, interview). Local needs policing proved to be the right approach for a number of reasons, one of the more important being that, despite its relatively small size, the country needed various styles of policing in different areas at different times (Horn quoted in Albrecht and Jackson, eds., 2009 p. 31). Defined as "[a] system of policing that meets the needs and expectations of the local community, but [is]

delivered within a national framework of standards and guidelines" (Horn quoted in Albrecht and Jackson, eds., 2009 p. 31), the local needs policing

(…) has bridged the gap between the police and the people. Local Policing Partnership Boards were established in every division to enable community members to have a say in the policing of their neighbourhoods. Regular meeting are now held with civilians to encourage them to assist in day-to-day policing (…) (Fakondo, 2008).

In each district, Boards comprise non-partisan, inter-religious groups that strive to improve the police/public interface. Their responsibilities range from monitoring police performance to serving as a discussion forum on matters of relevance to policing and enhancing the cooperation in preventing crime (Hanson-Alp, 2008). Boards played an important role in reaching out to those who had been alienated by the police (Horn, Olonisakin and Peake, 2006). Initiatives like this contributed to the practical application of the motto "security is everybody's business". They also served to improve the ability of the public to signal their security needs to the security providers, in line with the evolutionary approach discussed above.

Another significant development within the police, which proved to be very successful, was the introduction of the Family Support Units (FSUs). These units began in 1999 as a Domestic Violence Unit established in Freetown to address a rise in domestic violence; it was later given a broader mandate and transformed into the Family Support Unit, tasked with responding not just to sexual offences, but also to cruelty against women and children (Fakondo, 2008). The FSU trainers underwent police training to enable them to investigate specific crimes, and established partnerships with other interested organisations (Fakondo, 2008). Due to a major publicity campaign, the FSU became well-known; this initiative gave the police a high profile on the ground and changed public perceptions dramatically (Fakondo, 2008; Jackson, 2008, interview). The experience proved so successful, that it was exported elsewhere in the region (e.g. Liberia) (Jackson, 2008, interview; Fakondo, 2008). This is a good example of trial-and-error experimentation and replication/imitation not just on the national, but also on the regional level.

Another example consistent with the evolutionary approach comes from the 2002 Defence White Paper process. The aim of the Paper was to explain to the general public both the progress and shortcomings of SSR in Sierra Leone's defence system, which was important, as "without making this information publicly available, opportunities to engage ordinary people in future reform efforts would be limited" (Kondeh, 2008). The process incorporated a number of consultations, both within and outside the defence system, and involved government ministries, departments and agencies along with an NGO and members of Parliament (Kondeh, 2008). It created variation, in the form of new perspectives and information being introduced into the process, and a selection environment by which proposals were selected for their resonance with society, not by their appeal to defence officials. The process was locally-owned and was seen as paving the way for a future review capable of incorporating diverse opinions throughout the country, and thus embraced elements of trial-and-error experimentation. The scope of the document allowed for inclusion of sufficient information to enable people to form opinions on a range of issues, from defence in general to the new management of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Armed Forces. Not only did the White Paper become the first document in the history of the country respecting the right of its people to know and be informed on state-level security sector policy, but it also resulted in a re-organisation of the MoD and the Armed Forces (Kondeh, 2008). This re-organisation had better chances of success as it reflected the aspirations of all the concerned.

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Clearly, the experience of Sierra Leone in terms of SSR can only be defined as a qualified success (Jackson, 2008, interview); not everything has worked and a lot of challenges remain (see, for instance, Horn, Olonisakin and Peake, 2006; Gbla, 2006; Gonifer, 2006; Albrecht and Jackson, 2009). In addition, one needs to be cautious in terms of extrapolating any models or solutions that worked in Sierra Leone and of making any policy recommendations based on this experience, given that the context is so important (Albrecht and Jackson, 2009; Jackson, 2008, interview) and that there is no 'one size fits all' solution[3].

Iraq

'Doing it for them' (capacity substitution)
versus 'helping them to do it for themselves' (capacity building)
(Rathmell, 2007)

The situation in Iraq was, (and remains) very different to that of Sierra Leone. If Sierra Leone's experience was unprecedented because it was the first of its kind, the experience of post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq was unprecedented because it was "the most ambitious and demanding" of all operations of this kind so far (Rathmell, 2005 p. 1013). While the initial reform efforts in Sierra Leone were halted by the renewed conflict and only resumed when it was largely over (Albrecht and Jackson, 2009), for quite some time security sector engagement in Iraq took place in a conflict environment, pursuing the goal of curbing violence rather than that of institution-building (Martin, 2008, interview). This tension between the urgent need to stabilise the situation and the longer term need for capacity and institution-building had a profound impact on the reform efforts in terms of their priorities and methods[4]. Initially there was a pressure to build the security forces quickly and to have a lot of Iraqis in uniforms in the streets. While this was arguably necessary for a number of reasons, it resulted in large numbers of armed people and not much in terms of institutional capacity (Rathmell, 2007; Rathmell, 2008, interview). At the same time as expanding the Iraqi police from 60,000 to over 400,000, a range of complex systems, challenging even for the developed western countries, were introduced (e.g. digitisation of processes, electronic vehicle registration, biometrics, etc.). This approach was not successful, and while there were many reasons for that, the lack of capacity to digest the overwhelming amount of information to which they were exposed and to respond in anything other than a reactive, ad hoc way to the security challenges they faced, made it difficult, if not impossible, for the Iraqi Police and Ministry of Interior (MOI) to succeed (Martin and Wilson, 2008).

The overall approach, which initially did not consider local ownership as a priority, did gradually change, however:

At the beginning, the US were running everything, but now it is different. At the start, most of the policies were designed and imposed by the US with little if any consultation with the locals. There were attempts to oppose that on the Iraqi side, and in time the approach did change (Rathmell, 2008, interview).

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[3] It has also been suggested that the SSR in Sierra Leone has been and is likely to remain unprecedented in terms of the amount of external assistance and its long-term nature (Jackson, 2008, interview).
[4] Similar tension also characterises the situation in Afghanistan. It has been suggested that there should be a distinction made between stabilisation efforts and SSR, and that SSR is impossible in an ongoing serious conflict or immediately afterwards (Biesheuvel, 2009, interview).

One attempt to accommodate evolutionary imperatives into the reform effort involved the establishment of the local project management board chaired by an Iraqi representative tasked with setting objectives for the reform. On a number of occasions, the board members came up with new requests, some of which were accommodated. Although this initiative did not work as well as intended due to the lack of local capacity, it represented an important step towards supporting local ownership (Martin, 2008, interview). The following insight supports this point and would be just as true for any other reform effort elsewhere:

The point is not that Coalition advisors should not be providing their Iraqi counterparts with good ideas, international examples or advice. It is that the aim of the advisory process should be either to support and inform existing reform efforts or, where these do not exist, to help Iraqi officials to understand how their problems – which they usually understand all too well – can be addressed in new ways. This can be time-consuming work requiring patience and a high degree of tact but it has been demonstrated many times over in Iraq since 2003 that any other approach is doomed to fail (Rathmell, 2007 p. 13).

In other words, external assistance should focus on being attentive to and nurturing local initiatives and incipient reforms, which are much more context-specific than imported ideas. At the same time, training and capacity-building are essential to enable people to generate such initiatives in the first place. In evolutionary terms, these activities serve as an essential means of creating variation by introducing the means to generate new approaches, and selection by developing the means to identify and support promising existing solutions (Martin and Wilson, 2008). For instance, one of the reform efforts in Iraq with the participation of British advisers was focused on improving general management capacity. This effort was not about developing a particular strategy, but about helping local counterparts to formulate their own strategies (Martin, 2008, interview). It involved training "a small number of mid-level officers in core management and administrative functions, not as a means to a strategic goal, but as an end in itself", which was intended to help "generate a small cadre of individuals equipped with the ability to help MOI improve its own systems, in its own way" (Martin and Wilson, 2008 p. 89). At the end of a part-time, nine month-long programme, participants reported on the ways in which they had applied their newly-acquired knowledge; their initiatives, while modest, were genuinely locally-owned (Martin and Wilson, 2008). The programme in question can be seen as a pilot project, incorporating trial-and-error experimentation and allowing certain approaches to be tried out on a small scale and, if successful, replicated on a bigger scale). Importantly, pilot projects can also be used as a diagnostic tool to better understand how particular systems or their elements work, and thus increase the likelihood of subsequent efforts being successful.

Training and capacity-building activities can also make a difference in terms of selection and replication, as, following exposure to information and new ways of doing things, decision-makers will be more likely to support bottom-up innovation. Sometimes people do things in a particular way only because they do not know that they can be done differently. One example from Iraq was a senior management study tour. British advisors provided senior level commanders with an opportunity to go to a range of countries in the region and further afield where they were introduced to new ideas and new approaches. They were explicitly not being given 'models' of how they should do things – but rather being given options that they could assess, adapt and use in achieving their own priorities (Martin, 2008, interview).

Another interesting example of experimentation, as opposed to following a fixed plan, in Iraq comes from the so-called Sunni awakening (Sawah movement) which involved mobilising former insurgents to fight against al Qaida in Iraq (AQI). The Sawah was brought about by a US initiative on the ground which had not been planned

in advance. When the effort succeeded, it was replicated in other parts of the country[5] (Rathmell, 2008, interview).

As far as the overall planning of the post-conflict reconstruction is concerned, Rathmell (2005) argues that the criticism that the Coalition had no post-war plans in Iraq is misguided and the problem was not the absence of plans but the efficacy and appropriateness of these plans and processes. The planning was based on a number of assumptions which proved false:

Planners assumed that military operations would have a clear and decisive end, in other words that there would not be extensive post-war resistance by Iraqi forces; that the coalition would have to deal with serious humanitarian crises, including flows of refugees and internally displaced people; that the coalition could rapidly hand over civil governance to robust Iraqi governing institutions such as the line ministries and the police; and that most Iraqis would embrace the political transition to a 'new Iraq' and actively support democratization of the political system (Rathmell, 2005 p. 1022).

More importantly, those assumptions, as well as the plans based on them, were not challenged for quite some time. In addition, there was a tendency to both avoid reporting bad news and even planning for contingencies or making alternative plans (Rathmell, 2005).This example highlights the limitations of the planning and design approaches, as well the dangers of relying on a set of inflexible assumptions which may well be wrong. After all, no matter how good and comprehensive a plan is, there are limits as to what can be achieved through it, and therefore what, arguably, is more important is "to have a flexible planning process that will allow rapid adaptation when circumstances change" (Rathmell, 2005 p. 1026). Such an understanding is compatible with the evolutionary approach with its focus on the ability of organisations to react to changing environmental pressures. It argues for a model in which an organisation's plans are able to evolve, and indeed advocates 'planning to evolve'. As has been discussed already with respect to local counterparts, this ability is something that training and capacity-building initiatives can develop and/or improve (building the 'prepared mind' of the organisation).

Another lesson from the CPA experience in terms of planning had to do with the need to give country teams more freedom to develop operational mission plans and to monitor their progress while remaining responsive to the capital. At the same time, a communication infrastructure enabling a collaborative information environment needed to be established (Rathmell, 2005). Such decentralisation, coupled with effective communication, is in line with the evolutionary approach, and can also be mirrored by decentralisation of security provision, as it was the case in Sierra Leone (in fact, the concept of community policing, which worked well for Sierra Leone, is also being discussed with respect to Iraq (Martin, 2008, interview)). While decentralisation will not always be the answer, and uniformity in standards and their application remains crucial, it can allow for more context-specific arrangements better suited to local needs, which is especially important for countries with significant regional differences.

As we have seen, in Sierra Leone important mistakes were avoided when specialists on the ground decided not to follow rigidly instructions from the donor capital. It may seem counterintuitive, but the absence of a well-defined strategy resulted in some productive creativity. Overall, the SSR experience of Sierra Leone offered a

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[5] In a similar fashion, in Helmand province of Afghanistan, British tried to negotiate a truce with the Taliban with respect to certain locations (an effort which was opposed by the US). The agreements sometimes worked, sometimes not, but the approach was tried out and was beneficial at least on some occasions (Rathmell, 2008, interview).

number of examples of the application of the evolutionary approach, ranging from iterative review processes to context- and needs-specific local policing.

In contrast, the majority of the reform efforts in Iraq were not guided by the evolutionary approach, especially in the beginning. Planning based on a number of fixed assumptions that proved to be wrong, combined with the pressure to find quick fixes to widespread insecurities at the price of capacity and institution-building, led to some ill-informed decisions and policies that were neither locally-owned, nor sustainable. At the same time, some elements of the evolutionary approach have been present in a number of reasonably successful activities, such as a general skills training programme for MOI employees and the replication of tactical successes which grew into the Sunni 'awakening' movement. In addition, there are many ways in which its fuller application could have worked better in a number of areas.

The democratic purpose of security sector evolution

As we have outlined, an overwhelming criticism of the rationalist approach to SSR is that in practice it is inimical to democracy and local ownership. The key decisions on programme design, targets and metrics are all taken at the beginning of the process, when external actors' knowledge of the local context is at its lowest and the capacity of local actors to contribute to the deliberations is at its weakest. Even in those cases when members of the local elite are involved in project design, this is a very weak conception of local ownership, as in a developing or post-conflict context there may be no reason to believe that the elite are truly representative of the people (Martin and Wilson, 2008).

The real democratic purpose of SSR should instead be to make the security sector responsive, in their every action, to the needs and priorities of all citizens (see Knight, 2009 for a formulation of this idea in terms of the social contract). SSR programmes sometimes aim to achieve this through mechanisms such as legislation and parliamentary oversight, but at best these are only part of the solution and represent "the long route to accountability", as opposed to the "short route" of direct responsiveness to citizens' needs (World Bank, 2004). Security Sector Evolution, instead of seeing "local ownership" as a means to the end of implementing a programme of reform, sees local ownership and democratisation as the purpose of reform, because the principal mechanism of change is that the sector senses and adapts to the day-to-day demands made on it by citizens. This is discussed in more detail, and related to ideas of deliberative democracy (Fung and Wright, 2003) and autonomy (Sen, 1999), in Martin and Wilson (2008). In this view there is no need to choose between prioritising governance or capacity building - good governance is achieved primarily by helping institutions develop the capacity to respond to citizens (Martin and Wilson, 2009), not solely by the creation and training of state-level oversight institutions or other high-level democratic reforms.

Introducing the evolutionary idea into programming

There are both normative and positive elements to the evolutionary analysis. Evolution is normative for the reasons described above – an evolutionary approach is more democratic and involves a deeper conception of local ownership.

The positive element is simply that this is a better analysis of how security institutions do actually change in practice, however inconvenient that may be for external donors. Whilst institutions that do not change in this fashion may exist, they do not actually deliver security to the people and so are not as important in an analysis of the security sector as they might seem – as argued above they are made irrelevant by other, more responsive non-state and militia institutions.

An evolutionary approach to SSR programming would place greater emphasis on variation – that is introducing a range of new concepts and approaches that can be experimented with and adapted for the local context. The Iraqi example of taking Ministry officials on a tour of several different countries was a deliberate attempt to expose the officials to new models and ways of working, without dictating which would be appropriate for the Iraqi context. Programming would also focus on variation in the information that the institution received – for example by ensuring that different voices could be heard throughout the decision-making process, as occurred in the Sierra Leone Defence Review, and expanding the individuals who are represented in local and state-level security committees, as happened with PROSECs and DISECs in Sierra Leone (a second example is described in Martin and Wilson 2008).

Secondly, an evolutionary approach to SSR would focus on ensuring that selection mechanisms operate effectively, and useful initiatives are identified, rewarded, sustained and ultimately replicated. This requires a focus on the dynamics of incentives, information, decision-making and resource allocation within an institution, including mechanisms to understand how activities respond to citizens' concerns and positively affect overall human security. It would include an attempt to ensure that human resource structures reward merit and innovation and disincentivise behaviours likely to restrict or damage responsiveness. Sierra Leonean PROSECs and DISECs are a good example of how this works in practice as they exercised a high degree of horizontal accountability over their members and enabled good information flows – for the first time local police chiefs or military commanders had to be able to justify their actions to local civil society, and received instant feedback on the successes and failures of their approach. Developing capacity to undertake coherent opinion polling, coupled with a planning system designed to enable the organisation to incorporate the results of public polling into policy decision-making processes, is another example of how donors could develop selection mechanisms.

Finally, strategic planning techniques such as assessment tools (eg Clingendael 2005) and logical frameworks (logframes) would be used with far greater care and awareness of their limitations. An assessment would be seen as no more than a set of working hypotheses, to be tested repeatedly against experience and the growing ability of local owners to influence the analysis. Logframes would be constructed to focus on improving responsiveness, information flows, incentives and resource allocation within an institution and would not attempt in advance to set the specifics of resulting behaviour, for example by defining "objectively verifiable indicators" for security measures which may or may not in fact be priorities for the local population.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have considered some alternative approaches to institutional change - the evolutionary approach and the related organisational learning approach - and their implications for SSR. We have argued that these approaches can provide useful insights for SSR policy-makers and practitioners which can inform more democratic, locally-owned and sustainable institutional change. Drawing from experience of SSR in Sierra Leone and Iraq, we have demonstrated that the evolutionary approach to SSR can and does work in practice – but that such successful approaches often occur by accident or necessity rather than by design and can be inadvertently undermined by the implicitly rationalist approach of planners in donors' headquarters, supported by the utopian ideas of some theorists. To borrow an old joke about typical objections to empirical research made by theoretical economists, security sector evolution already works in practice, but doesn't yet work in theory.

Whilst an evolutionary approach cannot by definition provide a single, universally applicable model, or a ready-made solution for a particular security sector, it can serve as an overall framework enabling the generation of a number of alternative models, selection of the most appropriate ones and replication of those of that have proved to be successful. This approach can be applied in any country, given that it informs initiatives that are always context-specific. The arguments presented here are tentative and should be treated as designed to generate further discussion on the general applicability and usefulness of the evolutionary and other compatible approaches for SSR, along with further country-specific research on the solutions inspired by that discussion.

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ANNEX I. OVERVIEW OF SOME OTHER SCHOOLS OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT[6]

The institutional school

Important differences between various strands of the new institutionalism notwithstanding, new institutionalists generally define 'institution' in a rather broad way as "an underlying, durable pattern of rules and behaviour" (Dovers quoted in Connor and Dovers, 2004 p. 10) and usually distinguish between institutions and organisations. While some would argue that some organisations that persist over time and are widely recognised can be called institutions (Dovers quoted in Connor and Dovers, 2004 p. 11), others, like North (1990), one of the most influential institutionalists, insist on the distinction between the two terms. North suggested that "[i]nstitutions are the rules of the game in the society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North, 1990 p. 3). Institutions represent "environmental variables set by society that condition behaviour generally, and therefore the emergence, form and actions of organizations" (Connor and Dovers, 2004 p. 12). Institutions are made up of both formal constraints that are created, and informal ones that mostly evolve over time.

According to North, all constraints form a continuum, and the difference between formal and informal ones are one of degree only. Importantly, informal constraints are pervasive and culture-specific. They include "(1) extensions, elaborations, and modifications of formal rules, (2) socially sanctioned norms of behaviour, and (3) internally enforced standards of conduct" (North, 1990 p. 40). Formal constraints include legal, political and economic rules, as well as contracts; they function to complement and strengthen informal constraints (North, 1990). Both formal and informal constraints act together to shape choices, which accounts for stability, as, at any particular moment, every choice is influenced by a large number of specific formal and informal constraints. North (1990) emphasises that the stability of institutions does not mean they are efficient, and, although stability is essential for complex interactions, it is not a sufficient condition for institutional efficiency.

Stability notwithstanding, institutional change does occur, albeit in a predominantly incremental fashion. Small changes in formal and informal constraints gradually alter the institutional framework. Importantly, while changes in informal constraints often evolve "without any specific purposive activity by individuals or organizations, changes in formal rules and/or enforcement" normally require a deliberate action (North, 1990 p. 87). At the same time, while formal rules can be amended overnight, informal rules are much more resistant to deliberate policies, and, therefore, change in formal and informal constraints occurs at a different speed. The distinction between formal and informal constraints along with the fact that they change in a different way mean that "we cannot start from a blank canvas" (Connor and Dovers, 2004 p. 18) and that only changing formal rules is not enough and is unlikely to result in a sustainable change. According to North, the entrenched nature of informal constraints accounts not only for institutional change being predominantly incremental, but also

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[6] This overview is based mostly on MINTZBERG, H., B. AHLSTRAND and J. LAMPEL. 1998. *Strategy safari: the complete guide through the wilds of strategic management*. London: The Free Press.

continuous and path-dependent. In his words, "[t]hese cultural constraints not only connect the past with the present and future, but provide us with a key to explaining the path of historical change" (North, 1990 p. 6).

North (1990) joins advocates of the evolutionary and learning approaches in criticising the rational actor model of classic economics and argues that, should all actors be perfectly rational and their motivations and preferences uncomplicated and stable, and should they always act on complete information, their choices would always be efficient, but, clearly, this is not the case, and, as a result, persistently inefficient paths are common.

Having superimposed the evolutionary framework on the institutional insights, Aldrich and Ruff (2006 p. 39) suggest that "[i]institutional theorists have treated variation primarily as external in origin, generated as organizations are forced to respond to, adapt to, or imitate the ebb and flow of normative and regulatory currents in their environments". According to Aldrich and Ruff (2006), the focus on the environmental influence is very common for the institutional approach. As we have seen, when environments are understood as institutions, the main theme becomes that of reproduction. Having reviewed various contributions by institutionalists, the authors identified various ways in which environments dominate organisations with organisational structures:

- imposed or authorised by a higher authority;
- induced by a higher authority;
- acquired via imitative or normative isomorphism;
- imprinted by the attributes of organisational surroundings;
- incorporated (when organisation adapt to the degree of differentiation in their environments) or
- by-passed (when more attention is paid to normative pressures than technical requirements) (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 41).

As for selection forces in institutional theories, they usually arise from the constraining cultural elements and more often than not result in conformity. Furthermore, norms tend to cohere within organisational fields constituted by actors with a shared substantive interest (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 40). Struggles within organisational fields develop not only over material, but also non-material resources, with the most intense ones being over the ability to shape and impose rules (Fligstein and Freeland quoted in Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 40). Organisations change their structures to conform to the pattern supported by the external and powerful legitimating forces, and when an organisation loses its legitimacy, other organisations stop to adopt that form and chose other forms instead (Aldrich and Ruff, 2006 p. 40).

The positioning school

This school suggests that "only a few key strategies are desirable in any given industry" (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 83). The process of strategy formation within this school is focused on the selection of the most appropriate one from a finite number of options. The origins of this school can be traced back to military strategy which operates in accordance with the same principle. However, as Mintzberg et al. argue, this school is especially attractive to consultants, who, equipped with a few general strategies, do not need to have a detailed knowledge of a particular organisation/business to suggest which strategy they should pursue.

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The positioning school is open to the same kinds of criticisms as the design and planning schools. In addition, it has problems in terms of the focus, context and process. Firstly, it has a very narrow focus in that it tends to ignore any broader social or political factors. Secondly, it has a very narrow context and displays a significant bias towards well-established big businesses. Furthermore, its explicit focus on the external conditions to the detriment of internal capabilities makes its approach rather unbalanced. Thirdly, in terms of the process, the central message of this school "is not to get out there and learn, but to stay home and calculate" (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 115). With its focus on generic strategies, established industries and hardened data, this school is one of the most deterministic: although it talks about choice, it limits it to a number of prescriptions of which the most suitable is chosen under any given set of circumstances. That said, the positioning school has made a number of important contributions to the theory and practice of strategic management as it added content to the planning school and shifted the role of planner to that of an analyst (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

The entrepreneurial school

For this school, strategy is a "perspective, associated with image and sense of direction, or vision" (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 124). Its central figure is that of the leader, whose entrepreneurial strategy is both deliberate and emergent in that, on the one hand, it does offer a sense of direction, while, on the other hand, its details emerge and can be adapted in the process. The entrepreneurial school views strong leadership informed by a strategic vision as the key to success. It was originally associated with those who set up their own businesses, but later expanded to cover various leaders in organisations possessing the necessary qualities. The strategy making within this school is marked by the following:

- a proactive approach – searching for new opportunities;
- power being centralized in the hands of the chief executive;
- dramatic jumps forward under the conditions of uncertainty; and
- growth being perceived as the dominant goal of the organization (Mintzberg, 1973 quoted in Mintzberg et al., 1998 pp. 133-136).

One of the main contributions of this school was that it addressed certain crucial aspects of strategy formation, such as its proactive nature and the role of leadership and strategic vision (p. 143). At the same time, by concentrating the strategy formation in the hands of a single individual, it does not tell us much about the process itself. Furthermore, there is no (and can hardly be an) agreement regarding the moral value of qualities that great leaders possess or should possess. Finally, the concept of vision is not without deficiencies of its own. Thus, Stacey (Stacey, 1992 quoted in Mintzberg et al., 1998 pp. 144-145) suggests that, firstly, vision can never provide concrete enough advice; secondly, it "can fix managers too tightly in one direction"; thirdly, it puts a huge burden on the leader; and finally, it distracts from what is really happening in the organisation in terms of learning and political interaction.

The above deficiencies notwithstanding, Mintzberg et al. (1998) suggest a number of contexts for which the insights provided by the entrepreneurial school may be the most suitable. Those include a startup situation where strong leadership and vision are indispensable; organisations experiencing serious difficulties that require

a leader capable of producing dramatic changes through turnaround; and ongoing small organisation which rely on strong personal leadership for their survival.

The cognitive school

This school added a new important dimension to the strategic management scholarship by focusing on what actually happens in the minds of strategists. However, understanding these processes is far from straightforward, especially given the duality of the relationship between thinking and experience. The cognitive school is split into two wings. One wing is based on the positivist premise that we can obtain objective knowledge of the world; the other is constructivist and understands strategy as a subjective interpretation of reality (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

The cognitive school understands strategy formation as a cognitive process where strategies emerge as perspectives which shape the way people process the inputs from their environment. These inputs either flow through distorting filters before they get decoded by cognitive maps (the objective wing of the school) or represent interpretations of the world that reflect the way it is perceived by the viewer (the subjective wing of the school) (Mintzberg et al., 1998). Overall, strategies are not easy to attain, they are never optimal and neither are they easy to change.

According to Mintzberg et al. (1998), the central premise of the cognitive school is clearly valid as the process of strategy formation inevitably has a cognition element to it. However, we do not know enough about the human mind and the human brain to fully understand the processes by which strategies as perspectives form, persist or change. Some of the contributions that the constructivist wing of the school has made relate to the recognition of the importance of the creative side of strategy-making and appreciation of the different perspectives that people may have of the world. The school has also highlighted the interdependent stages of strategy formation which include the period of the conception of strategy, periods of the re-conception of existing strategies, and periods of cognitive fixation on exiting strategies. Appreciation of these stages is important for any strategist intending to bring about change.

The power school

The power school's interpretation of politics is different from the conventional in that it has a much narrower scope and more often than not has negative connotations. Politics for the power school are "synonymous with the exploitation of power" (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 234). Power relations exist both on the micro level, i.e. within the organisation, and the macro level, i.e. between organisations. This school offers an important corrective to the rationalist view that strategies introduced by the management are embraced by the employees in an unproblematic way by suggesting that, in fact, strategies bear the imprint of organisational politics and are themselves political (Mintzberge et al., 1998).

Bolman and Deal (1997 quoted in Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 239) consider the following characteristics of organisational politics:

- organisations are understood as coalitions of individuals and groups;
- these groups and individuals have different values and interests;
- the key decisions are the ones regarding the allocation of limited resources;
- limited resources and differences in interests make conflicts inevitable; and, consequently,
- decisions emerge from bargaining, negotiation and fighting for position among those concerned.

According to Mintzberg et al. (1998), politics can play a positive role in an organisation in a number of ways: by ensuring that the best people are brought into the positions of leadership; by ensuring that all positions are fully discussed; by facilitating change blocked by other systems of influence; and by facilitating the implementation of change. At the same time, analysis of power politics at the macro level has led to the development of important insights on stakeholders' involvement, strategic manoeuvring and cooperative strategy making.

The key message of the power school is that we need to take intra and inter organisational politics into account, and, while it may overemphasise this point and ignore the role of such factors as culture and leadership, it can still provide useful insights for organisations during the periods of major change, for large, well established organisations, and for decentralised professional organizations (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

The cultural school

This school understands organisational culture as a system of shared values and beliefs reflected in traditions and habits, as well as more tangible stories, symbols and even infrastructure and products. In a way, culture represents the essence of the organisation, much of which exists at the subconscious level (Mintzberg et al., 1998). For the cultural school, "[s]trategy formation is a process of social interaction, based on the [shared] beliefs and understandings" (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 267). Individuals acquire these beliefs and understanding through the process of socialisation, largely tacit and informal, but sometimes more formalised. In any case, these beliefs and understandings always remain partially obscure and not easily verbalised. Strategy, then, is a "perspective (…) rooted in collective intentions (…) and reflected in the patterns by which the deeply embedded resources or capabilities, of the organization are protected and used for competitive advantage" (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 268). Importantly, culture does not encourage strategic change; it rather acts to support the existing strategy. Appreciation of culture is very important as it influences the way things are thought about and done in an organisation, and organisations with different cultures operating in the same environment will understand this environment differently and, therefore, will have different strategies (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

While a shared commitment to a system of beliefs and understanding encourages consistency and discourages change, this 'strategic inertia' of culture can be ameliorated by ensuring that flexibility and innovation are introduced as an important element of organisational culture (Lorsch, 1986 quoted in Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 270). Overall, however, while the cultural school highlights the importance of culture and provides important explanations for the resistance to change, it is still less helpful in explaining how change occurs or can be brought about. At the same time, the role of organisational culture is central in periods of reinforcement when a

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particular perspective is strictly adhered to, in periods of strong resistance to change, in periods of reframing when a completely new perspective is introduced, and, finally, in periods of cultural revolution which accompany strategic turnaround (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

The configuration school

This school has two sides, one of which is preoccupied with "the states of the organization and its contexts – as configurations", while the other focuses on strategy-making as transformation (Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 302). These two sides make it possible to account for both stability and change. Thus, the configuration side suggests that an organisation has a stable configuration of characteristics, as it adopts a certain structure to match its context which, in turn, allows it to engage in behaviour resulting in a set of particular strategies. Periods of stability are interrupted by transformations which represent moves towards another configuration. Periods of stability followed by periods of transformation form patterned sequences, or cycles. The essence of strategy is to sustain stability and to manage transformation which can be done in a number of ways (e.g. planning, learning, collective socialisation, etc.) depending on what is most suitable for a particular moment in time and specifics of the situation (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

It has been suggested by proponents of this school that change in organisations is mostly quantum, i.e. it involves the changing of many elements simultaneously, and can also happen quickly, i.e. in a revolutionary way. Such change becomes necessary when an existing configuration does not correspond to the environment, and a lot of things need to change at once. This logic will be most applicable to large, well-established organisations that tend to go through long periods of stability experiencing short periods of transformation along the way. This is not to suggest, however, that incremental change does not happen or is not important. It seems that strategists may well learn incrementally and then, when the moment is right, ensure a revolutionary leap (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

Transformation, then, is about the 'managed' change. However, some argue that

> Change can't be managed. Change can be ignored, resisted, responded to, capitalized upon, and created. But it can't be managed and made to march to some orderly step-by-step process.
>
> (Clemmer, 1995 quoted in Mintzberg et al., 1998 p. 325)

Despite these reservations, the vast literature on, and the extensive practice of, organisation transformation preoccupied itself with combining different approaches to change into sequences capable of turning an organisation around. Importantly, while there are times when a comprehensive change of such kind is necessary, not all organisations need to change everything about them, and change is not required all the time. Furthermore, while managed change can sometimes result in 'organic' change, the approach taken is far from organic, and is still rationalist (Mintzberg et al., 1998).