

HOMELAND SECURITY

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Introduction

In 2002, the U.S congress created the Homeland Security Department after the September 11th Al-Qaeda attack at the World Trade Center. The departments' responsibilities were to protect the U.S and its territories from terrorist attacks, natural disasters and man-made accidents and to act in response to these attacks. Amongst its goals are to prepare, prevent, and counter domestic emergencies, especially those triggered by terrorists. With the formation of this department, twenty-two agencies converged with a mandate to improve the U.S efforts to protect the country from terrorism. Additionally, the country has witnessed major changes within its law enforcement and intelligence organizations.

1. TOPICAL AREA

Local Police Departments

Police officers are amongst the first individuals to respond to security emergencies and accidents. After the September 11th attacks, the police became cognizant of the value of information sharing and networking on extremely new levels. In addition to this, national security agencies needed partnership with local police departments to make terrorism prevention easier (Alexander, 2005). Police chiefs and departments are capable of identifying potential terrorists, operating or living within their jurisdictions. They can also aid in protecting vulnerable targets of terrorism and coordinate and perform initial response actions to attacks. These responsibilities significantly widen the police force workload. Local police officers maintain common presence in their jurisdictions as they frequently communicate with local business owners and residents; hence they are most likely to notice even subtle changes in their neighborhoods. Additionally, the police are most likely to be aware of and know Islamic and Arabic leaders in their areas, who they can reach out for information. In this respect, the police play a major role in endorsing community policing as a strategy of countering terrorism, by earning and maintaining the trust of their local communities (Alexander, 2005).

Local police departments are also helpful in ensuring that immigrant communities are free of terrorists or potential terrorists. Immigrant communities offer basic conditions for foreigners to settle in a new country, hence they make it easier for terrorists to obtain credit cards, bank accounts and get money to assist

them to settle in the country. Because of this, the police pay attention to such communities when seeking information regarding potential attacks. On the negative end, these immigrant communities feel threatened, resentful and fearful of police, hence, may fail to cooperate. The police also have the accountability of defending and providing assurance of non-victimization to these communities, while also ensuring they do not support or harbor terrorism.

2. CHALLENGE OF THE LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS

The major problem identified in this topical area is victimization within minority communities, especially Islamists and Muslims.

Following the police responsibility of obtaining intelligence or information from local residents, and especially from members of immigrant communities, there have been complaints of police harassments by people from these communities and those from the Muslim communities (Alexander, 2005). As explained above, the immigrants and Muslim communities feel threatened whenever there is a new terror alert. This, as mentioned above, may lead to lack of cooperation of these individuals with the security authorities, which makes it more difficult for police to work effectively. Moreover, the police are faced with this difficulty when dealing with immigrant communities because of the following reasons:

- Language and cultural barriers, which hinder effective communication and trust between the two parties
- Many immigrants have limited knowledge about their rights, law enforcements and civil rights, hence may view police normal routines as negative
- New immigrants usually bring heightened distrust and fear of the police
- Immigrants maintain fear that contact with law enforcers and police officers would threaten their status or existence in the country.

New local policing strategies require deep engagement of the community into police activities, hence, pressuring the local police departments to ensure they maintain good relationship and understanding with the Muslim community as well as other communities. Building and maintaining relationship of trust between these two parties is the major challenge for the police. This is because of the preconceived perceptions that most Muslims have of police officers (Schanzer, Kurzman & Moosa, 2010). This perception arose as a result of the U.S zeroing on Islamist terrorism. Most Muslims perceive police officers as those

who harbor religious and ethnic biases. This prevents cooperation, while increasing feelings of alienation of the immigrant communities.

Studies on terrorist attacks in the U.S indicate that more than forty percent of tips and information about terrorists originate from American Muslims. Despite this, there has always been a bad blood between Muslims and most police departments, especially the NYPD, who have been in the limelight in regards to American Muslims surveillance. There have been floods of reports regarding the surveillance of Muslims in bookstores, mosques, elementary schools and restaurants by the New York Police Department. These reports trigger various responses and feelings from other public officials and Muslim community. Genuine efforts to build and repair partnership between the police and American Muslims present a suitable approach to combating terrorism without disregarding the American constitutional values. It is mandatory for the police departments, the FBI, as well as other law enforcements agencies, to build trust with American Muslims who are best positioned to provide the necessary information for averting terrorist plots.

American Muslims are religiously diverse; they include both the Shia and Sunni traditions, as well as a range of practices and adherence. Since the 2001 September attack, the FBI, police departments and several government agencies have targeted Muslims based on religion in their strategies to combat terrorism. The extent to which an individual was visibly identifiable as a Muslim would shape his or her life experiences in the U.S. Research indicates that the greatest prejudices and public hostility has been directed towards people who are perceived or visibly identifiable as Muslims, as well as non-Muslims wearing turbans. In the counter terrorism policy and policing context, homeland security stakeholders, such as the FBI, have focused on certain minorities within Muslim religious community. Specifically, organizations and individuals affiliated to Islamist traditions feel that they come under greater pressure, suspicion and scrutiny. Religion and Muslim identity greatly influenced an individual's experiences in the past, hence shaping the individual's response to counter terrorism policies and policing practices. Particularly, religion has become a more important and salient identity marker in response to discrimination experiences. It is a tool that is most sought in an effort to fight terrorism.

Intelligence-led policing is a strategy created by policy makers and the 9/11 Commission that combines discrete pieces of information about terrorism. The leading exponent of this strategy is the NYPD, which has invested heavily on this

policing by hiring counter terrorism and intelligence experts, as well as officers fluent in foreign languages, stationed overseas agents and monitors new intelligence and news services. A major flaw of this strategy is that it begins with assumptions that if police departments can simply collect a variety of information, they will be able to identify suspicious activities, which will aid them in destroying terrorist conspiracies or cells. Reminders and exhortations for people to report suspicious individuals or activities to police hotlines have accompanied this approach. In response, events, individuals or behaviors labeled as “suspicious” are ambiguous, leaving open opportunities for citizens to exercise preconceptions or prejudices they may have regarding what or who qualifies as “suspicious”. Under these circumstances, there is a common tendency to obtain useless information that the public may be unaware of due to their “secrecy” policy. Intelligence-led policing also relies on agencies and individuals sharing information that is later collated and interpreted to come up with intelligence. A major impediment to sharing terrorism information promptly is that these agencies lack intelligence staffs, trained through a common curriculum, as well as suitable technology. Local police departments may lack suitable software and computing equipments to facilitate their data systems or have little inter connectivity between their computer systems. In the absence of such interconnectivity and uniformity, it is difficult for these departments to have an electronic network for collecting and transmitting information across the country.

3. STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTION AND DECISIONS

The American Media (journalists), government officials, academicians and activists, in the past, have maintained a widespread tendency of assuming that Muslims and Islamist organizations that are historically associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism and Wahhabism represent a majority of American Muslims. This is a fact that the coalition of Muslim American leaders deplores. The leaders recognize and regret the widespread fear of Muslims and Islam, which is attributed to the mentioned stakeholders. This fear has facilitated the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Islam attitudes within America.

After the September 2001 attack, the United States passed an ACT of Patriot, which was a response to the attacks. This act permitted the detention and deportation of immigrants that were suspected to be linked to terrorist activities. It is noteworthy that the terrorist activities would be based on suspicion other than facts, hence encouraged victimization.

4. SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

There has been widespread damage to Muslim minorities, following the police activities to target them as suspect, as well as the negative media coverage. However, the United States has so far realized the damage this had caused, especially in making the country's counter terrorism efforts futile. To prevent and stop this trend and forge new relationships, the United States must invest in changing people's attitudes towards Muslim community. Education is a key strategy for changing attitudes. It is a tool that helps in changing the well-known habits and attitudes of the affected citizens. Despite the U.S population containing a well-educated majority, most are still ignorant of Muslim constitutions, beliefs, cultural and traditional differences as well as values. Educating youths and the wider population of these differences will help in ensuring that citizens avoid victimization at all costs. Having credible information about Muslims will also wave people's doubts, baseless suspicions and discrimination against the minority community. The 9/11 attacks left a vacuum in understanding Islam philosophy, as well as the greater American Muslim community. This vacuum has bred fear and ignorance that is fed by several stakeholders, such as the FBI and police departments. To undo this damage, education is necessary in order to make the public aware of danger of discrimination.

This will bring fundamental benefits to the country's anti-terrorism and counter terrorism efforts, as it will empower American Muslims to communicate with police officers, hence improve such efforts. Additionally, it is essential for the media to shun negative publicity or coverage that instigate animosity amongst communities (Schmitt, 2010). The media should maintain its integrity in providing credible information and especially information that promotes peace and equality. It should do this without compromising its position to report on the country's security, in connection with certain Muslim activities.

In order to guarantee that this solution is implemented, it would be helpful to make law enforcement agencies realize the collateral damage that victimization causes, especially in promoting disunity and broken trust, as well as undermining the rights and liberties of the Muslim community. It is crucial to discuss several strategies that are helpful in dealing with effects of victimization.

5. TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF MUSLIM VICTIMIZATION

Following the efforts to combat terrorism, some police departments, such as the NYPD, have been reported to utilize certain unacceptable approaches, through community policing, to “protect their neighborhoods” from terrorists. One of the publicly targeted approaches is the use of technological devices to monitor Muslims in colleges, restaurants and neighborhoods. The Islamic leadership coalition of America (AILC) has so far supported counter terrorism programs, and asserts that Muslims and Islamists are diverse and with diverse ideologies. Therefore, it would be improper to stereotype their community as terrorists, as this breeds hatred for Muslims and threatens the future of Muslim religion (Enein, 2008).

Technology and information system have played central roles in exacerbating this problem. Most anti-terrorism and counter terrorism approaches include an increase in domestic intelligence and standard police, whose traditional activities included tracing of people, communications interceptions, financial tracking and other law enforcement operations.

The U.S has also utilized its advanced technology and equipments to implement military intervention in some countries, such as Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Systems, such as the Incident Command Systems, have been utilized in North America to control several services included in counter terrorism. It is also common that the spying, monitoring and surveillance of the Muslim community were perpetrated using advanced technological devices and software.

6. PROOF OF THE PROBLEM OF VICTIMIZATION BY THE POLICE

Research counter terrorism and news items indicate that there have been reports and incidences where the Muslim community reported fear of victimization by police officers, as well as allegations of illegal spying and monitoring of individuals who belong to the Muslim community. These proofs are accompanied by the efforts of civil rights organizations to question challenge and stop these allegations, especially of the New York department of Police (NYPD). On

February 2012, the Associated Press reported that the local police departments in New York had monitored internet postings and exchanges of Muslim students from at least sixteen colleges. There are also reports on disagreements about the monitoring and surveillance strategies by the NYPD from other security agencies, including the FBI, civil rights organization and some media sections (Schmitt, 2010).

In addition to the above, Equality and Human Rights Commission published a report by Choudhury Tufyal and Fenwick Hellen, documenting the effects of counter terrorism measures on American and British Muslims. In the report, the authors carried out studies and interviews with individuals of the Muslim community and documented their experiences (Choudhury & Fenwick 2011). This report revealed the presence of victimization in these two countries. Another proof that cements the presence of this problem is the report of the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRG): Targeted and Entrapped, Homegrown threat manufactured in the United States. This report examines some terrorism trials in the U.S and raises questions regarding the role of the NYPD and the FBI in “manufacturing terrorism” by deploying paid informants to instigate terrorist plots in Muslim-dominated communities. This report portrays the extent to which victimization in the U.S has spread, leading to illegal actions by government agencies to encourage hostility towards the Muslim community. In order to change the citizen’s perceptions, it would be necessary to make citizens informed about such strategies.

7. SOLUTIONS / PLAN FOR THE CHALLENGES

- For the police to perform intelligence functions, the government should train officers in what signs to seek, as well as in sifting information in order to come up with useful information. With the potential loss of human life and property due to terrorist attacks, local communities may be more cooperative in passing on information relating to suspicious activities. To maximize the benefits of gathering information through community policing, stakeholders should ensure that community policing avoids:
 - a) Demoralizing community trust by compiling invalidated lists of suspects
 - b) Profiling charges, political and legal encumbrances, as well as phone tapping
 - c) Unproductive, yet costly, suspect surveillances
 - d) Secret and suspicious entrapment and operations.

- To guarantee that officers meet goals, it is necessary for senior management to check the frequency and quality of intelligence reports that officers supply.
- Police management should also habitually check that police officers set and meet concrete disorder and crime reduction goals in their neighborhoods.
- Managers should also implant preventive values, so that police officers comprehend the value of problem solving in detection and arrest, which should be followed by promotion and recognition.
- In order for police departments to successfully implement community policing, as well as overcome barriers with immigrant communities, they should:
 - a) Establish police substations in dominant communities
 - b) Forge partnerships with social services, schools and religious institutions to aid younger and elderly immigrants
 - c) Use immigrant newspapers, employers and religious institutions to communicate with immigrants who are unable to attend meetings
 - d) Involve immigrant leaders in designing and implementing cultural training for police officers
 - e) Clearly define and publicize immigration policies

8. METHODS OF ASSESSMENT TO ENSURE IMPLEMENTATION

1. Performance assessment

In this method, one uses observation and judgment to assess implementation and performance of the proposed solutions. Local police departments would prepare reports that document their operations and efforts in implementing these solutions. These documents could include a list of colleges they have visited to educate students on Islamic philosophies, their inclusion records of individuals of the Muslim community in countering terrorism and the detailed explanations of such involvement. In another perspective, performance assessment may include computational demonstrations of the implemented solutions, following instructions and protocols, as well as role-playing in demonstrating results of the solutions.

2. Communication assessment

This would include obtaining information about the relevant stakeholders in response to solutions implementation, as well as finding out what these stakeholders, such as the police departments, have learnt through interactions with the Muslim community (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011). This communication could also include comments and interaction with the Muslim community regarding any visible change and personally responding to such interactions. Additionally, communication assessment may also include discussions and presentations of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the solutions.

3. Selected response method of assessment

This method entails the involvement of stakeholders in responding to certain questions, related to the proposed solutions. In this respect, questions are formulated in a way that only those who have implemented the solutions may be able to answer them, using a short answer or a multiple-choice method. This will make visible those institutions that have not implemented the solutions.

CONCLUSION

There is a critical need to understand the consequences of counter terrorism practices, laws and policies, especially on community cohesion, human rights and equality. There have been concerns that counter terrorism policies and laws increasingly alienate Muslims. This paper has analyzed the problem of Muslim victimization by counter terrorism stakeholders, especially by the local police departments, such as the NYPD. The paper has deeply analyzed the problem, providing its history, the stakeholders involved, as well as the data that prove its existence. In addition to these, the paper has provided the role of technology and related systems in promoting this problem, as well as the possible solutions.

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