**Police and Fighting against Terrorism:**

**A Community-oriented Approach**

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**Abstract**

By entering the era al-Qaeda and ISIS, the indispensable work of police seems to have been shifted from traditional duties to handling terrorism threats. In some countries police fighting against terrorism and extremism has placed on the top of their regular responsibilities. In this regard, community policing can be utilized in police departments to prevent terrorism and formation of radicalization. In fact, community policing is an intelligent application of policing which can contribute to the prevention of terrorism in different ways. The present paper investigates the role of community policing in fighting with terrorism and extremism. The paper utilized an analytical library research methodology via reviewing the related recent literature in this field. Data analysis showed that implementing a successful community policing approach based on the target context brings various benefits to the public and police in fighting against terrorism. It also showed that engaging with various strata of community such as youth, women, minority groups, religious leaders, and communicating and interacting with people on counterterrorism are among effective strategies for implementing a community oriented approach in fighting against terrorism and extremism and radicalization. Finally authors discussed the process of community-oriented policing in Iranian police and their measures and initiatives to fight against terrorism, radicalization and extremism.

***Keywords:*** *community policing, terrorism, extremism, radicalization, police*

**Introduction**

Community policing can be considered as one of the main strategic approach which is helpful to traditional policing practices. The partnership between police and public is the main focus of this approach, where the police departments, government institutions and communities are actively participating and contributing in solving problems of the community (Weisburd & Neyroud, 2013). Engaging the community in policing can help all police departments in different ways; such as prevention and detection of crime, such as terrorism and extremism; protection of people`s fundamental rights and freedoms; the maintenance of public peace, law and order; reducing the fear of crime among people, physi­cal and social disorder within society and neighborhood.

In order to have a successful community policing approach police should consider and observe its key principle with great concern. For instance, police should be visible and accessible to the public; police should know, and be known by, the public; police should engage, mobilize and partner with communities; police should listen to communities’ concerns; police should respond to respect and protect the rights of all community members; and police should consider communities’ needs; and it should be accountable for their actions and its consequences (Walker & Archbold, 2013).

Utilizing the community policing bring various benefits to the public, the police and other institutions (Cordner, 2014):

* The strengthening of social relations within communities, which can enhance their ability to address community issues and the social problems could lead to crime or disor­der in the future;
* The ability of communities to convey their concerns and problems to the police and to become partners in finding solutions to it, which can lead to improved crime prevention, improved safety and security;
* The improvement of relations between the police and the public, increas­ing public trust, which is particularly important for relationships between the police and communities that may have been burdened by conflict in the past;
* An increase in police credibility and legitimacy, through greater transpar­ency and accountability of police actions towards communities;
* Saving resources and addressing social problems through cooperation with other government entities in problem solving;
* Increased safety and self-confidence of officers, due to greater awareness of dangers and potential help of people;
* An increase in police officers’ job satisfaction, due to more positive encoun­ters with the public;
* Improving the cooperation between police agencies, due to department-wide responsibilities and enhanced communication and co-operation between departments, as well as between front-line officers and their supervisors.

In the present paper, authors investigate the role of community policing in fighting with terrorism and extremism via an analytical library research methodology and reviewing the related recent literature in this field. It will discussed that engaging with various strata of community such as youth, women, minority groups, religious leaders, and communicating and interacting with people on counterterrorism are among effective strategies for implementing a community oriented approach in fighting against terrorism and extremism and radicalization. Finally authors will discuss the process of community-oriented policing in Iranian police and their measures and initiatives to fight against terrorism, radicalization and extremism.

**Community Policing and Preventing Terrorism**

Community policing can be utilized in police department in order to prevent terrorism and radicalizations. In fact community policing is a genuine application of policing which can contribute to the prevention of terrorism in different ways (Lamb, 2012).

In fighting with terrorism, community policing with help police officers to observe human rights and prevent its violations. Implementing community policing as a human rights-based approach to policing requires the development of operating rules and procedures that are in line with international human rights standards. It also entails equipping police officers with the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to protect human rights in their work. Human rights should be an integral part of all training for law enforcement officials. Police officers involved in counterterrorism should be provided with special­ized training on human rights in the context of counterterrorism.

It also helps to improve public perceptions and interaction with the police. Public trust in the police is not only a desired outcome of community policing, but also a precondition for its success. All members of the community, men and women, must believe that efforts to address their common and separate security concerns are genuine, that dialogue with the police is possible, and that their rights are respected, before they even consider participating in joint efforts.

When police want to communication on counterterrorism with the public, community policing will help a lot. The public should understand the nature of the threat, how they should respond in an emergency, what their rights are, where to report information, and what the police are doing to protect them. Police should consider making informa­tion available through a variety of means. This might include distributing information in different languages, as well as in formats that can be accessed by those with sight or hearing impairments (Choudhury, Fenwick, 2011).

Police also can increase its public presence by the use of community policing to prevent terrorism and radicalization. Providing an accurate and balanced assessment of a terrorist threat is critical to the successful mobili­zation of public support and the encouragement of public vigilance. It is vital that the nature and extent of the threat be neither exaggerated nor mini­mized. The public must have confidence in the reliability of the messages they are given about the terrorist threat. Police and government must care­fully balance the need to gain the public’s attention against the risk of frightening the population and creating anxiety and instability. By raising awareness, providing information and advice, as well as encouraging relevant citizen initiatives, the police can empower communities to develop their own internal resilience to terrorism (Bjelopera, 2012).

In order to find society dangers against terrorism and radicalization, police should use community policing. The reasons why people radicalize to violence are often linked to real or perceived problems and troubles, including violations of their rights and experi­ences of discrimination, and controversial policies. When a problematic issue falls outside the responsibilities of the police, police officers can advise the public on possible courses of action to strengthen community unity; they can facilitate the mobilization of community members, civil society organizations and competent public authorities, as appropriate.

In fighting with terrorism and radicalization, police can improve its relations with individuals and groups that have been hard to reach or not yet engaged with. Having better knowledge of communities and being able to rely on partners within commu­nities will improve the ability of the police to reach individuals or groups that are otherwise difficult for the police to approach. This is particularly true if the individuals or groups are distrustful or marginalized, or if they generally avoid contact with the public.

**Utilizing a Community-Policing Approach in Fighting against Terrorism**

There are different and various ways for utilizing a community policing approach and different countries can do it based on their specific context; in other way we can claim that it is somehow a context-bound concept. When a police department attempts to develop a community policing approach to fight against terrorism and prevent any radicalization and extremism, it should pay a close attention political, social and geographical context in which it is to be implemented. However there are some factors that in implementing it which can be effective for police departments to take them into their consideration. These factors are: knowing the problem, education, police work, infrastructure development, and assessment (Ekblom, 2010).

In***knowing the problem***stage, police should act to empower the community to know and deal with the problem of terrorism, radicalization and extremism in order to prevent then in the society.

In second stage, problems can sometimes be tackled by a process of ***education***, which the police can encourage and contribute to, for example, holding public information meetings in schools, youth clubs and public places.

If police detect a terroristic or extremist activity, through a targeted ***police work*** they can fight with it successfully in the early stages. Of course it is done by the help of those community members who are engaged with the community approach.

Through ***Infrastructure development***, concerns, tensions or problems of the communities can be solved. Police can do that by creating some changes in infrastructures. Although police cannot do it alone, they can join with other stakeholders to lobby for, or facilitate, inter-agency action.

***Assessment*** of the community based program is the last important stage. After conducting the related actions, policies, initiatives in the field of combating terrorism within the framework of community policing, it is indispensable to *evaluate* to what degree our actions were successful to prevent such crimes.

**Communicating with the Public on Counterterrorism**

Effective, appropriate and timely communication is at the core of success­ful community-policing approaches to preventing terrorism and countering extremism and radicalization.

However, there are inherent risks in this process: too little commu­nication can lead to rising levels of public anxiety; too much communica­tion and careless handling of information can undermine police operational capability and/or subsequent judicial proceedings; inappropriate or insensi­tive communication with either men or women can alienate the community and damage police-public relations (Nacos, 2016).

Police should proactively and regularly communicate with the public, not just in response to a specific counterterrorism activity or a terror­ist incident. The police should be prepared, in accordance with domestic legisla­tion, to communicate timely and relevant information to the public about counterterrorism operations. Police should be prepared to effectively handle their contact with the media, not just mainstream media outlets, but also citizen journalists (Newburn, 2012).

**Exchanging Information with Communities**

The police should not only communicate information to the public on counter­ing terrorism, it is also essential that the police create effective mech­anisms for a two-way exchange of information with communities on the prevention of terrorism and extremism. However, the exchange of information between communities and the police can be difficult. The willingness of members of the public to share information with the police, and how useful this information might be, will depend on the degree of trust and mutual understanding between the police and the communities they serve. if there is a common understanding of why the police need information from commu­nity members, the exchange of information will be facilitated. So it is important that police create a sense of understanding between themselves and the people (Coolsaet, 2010).

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2014) reports that in order to receive information from communities is important for the police to be able to:

* Monitor the situation and take timely, informed action as a concern is reported to them or appears to arise;
* Understand how the role of the police and its outreach towards the public is understood with regard to preventing terrorism;
* Understand how the threat of terrorism is perceived by men and women in the community;
* Identify the questions and concerns communities have about the preven­tion of terrorism and the explanation, information, and support they need from the police or other authorities;
* Assess the impact of counterterrorism measures on communities, how community members experience or perceive police action against terror­ism, the effectiveness and unintended consequences of policies, measures or specific operations;
* Refine and develop their understanding and assessment of the threat of terrorism in particular communities and how to effectively respond to it;
* Assess the readiness of communities to engage further and, possibly, part­ner with the police in preventing terrorism and countering; and
* Modify the way they communicate with community members on counter­ing terrorism and adopt more effective approaches to engaging further with communities.

For having an effective exchange of infor­mation with communities, police should do the following actions. First of all, the police should address terrorism prevention as part of a ***regular*** exchange with communities in all settings. Secondly, this information exchange should be ***reciprocal***. The police should share as much information as possible with communities to demonstrate their commitment to dialogue and partnership with the public. Having dialogue with the public is very important. Thirdly, this communication should be ***transparent***. It is important that the police be transparent about the fact that they are addressing terrorism prevention in their exchange with communities. And finally, the police should ***include*** a wide, representative range of community members in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and beliefs. The police should be prepared to confront a variety of opin­ions, include those from people critical of the police and/or government action (Duffield, 2014).

**Engaging with Communities to Prevent Terrorism**

An important and vital part of any efficient commu­nity-policing initiative, particularly one aimed at preventing terrorism and extremism and radicalization, is the process of engagement. Effective engagement is a very complicated process that needs sensitivity and careful planning. A inept or careless approach to police-community engagement can be more harmful than no engagement at all (Spalek, B. 2010).

Considering police-community engagement to prevent terrorism, we should consider ***why we are doing that, with which we should engage with and how this engagement should be conducted?***

There may be some reasons why police should conduct this engagement:

* Disseminating key information and messages to the public and preventing rumors;
* Ensuring public participation and co-operate with communities in solving problems.
* Building mutually respectful relationships as a basis for further co-operation; and
* Improving police awareness about what is happening in commu­nities;
* Identifying dangerous situations at an early stage in communities;
* Showing up their presence in communities, which can both provide comfort to the public and prevent any crime;
* Mobilizing members of the public in support of addressing the problems;

Another aspect of engaging with community is that police should communicate with all members of society. In fact, police engagement with the public should be inclusive and consists of all the strata of society, including high and low classes of the community. Police should not forget that they should strive to engage, in particular, with individu­als or groups that are marginalized, hard to reach, or who show risk behaviors. In this regard, police should take great care in establishing partnerships with indi­viduals, groups or organizations when there is evidence that these indi­viduals or groups are not unequivocally committed to non-violence and respect for universal human rights. The short- and long-term benefits and risks should be properly assessed to decide how much the police should support and empower such individuals, groups or organizations, and for which purpose. Some forms of engagements of police with people, such as the sharing of sensitive information, may require the police to limit their engagement to trusted members of the public, such as individuals who have undergone security vetting.

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Another issue is that how should the police engage with communities on the issue of preventing terrorism and extremism. In this regard, many practitioners agree that police engagement should be:

* Planned carefully to evaluate the level of current engagement and to determine and diminish possible risks as program advances.
* Adapted to the specific context, person, group or community engaged to be more effective.
* Clear about the fact that preventing terrorism and extremism is an issue that the police are addressing;
* Based on a wide range of community safety issues, just one of which will be preventing terrorism;
* bilateral, addressing both the concerns of the police and those of communities;
* Regular and disciplined and conducted both in formal and informal settings to increase opportunities for communicating, building mutual under­standing and trust, and exchanging information;
* assisted by third parties from other statutory bodies or from civil society; in fact, police can try to identify and draw on the support of intermediaries or sponsors within the community who can help the police establish contact and dia­logue where they might otherwise face reluctance and possible hostility.

**Engaging with Various Classes of Society**

Engaging with various strata of community such as youth, women, minority groups, religious leaders, and communicating and interacting with people on counterterrorism are among effective strategies for implementing a community oriented approach in fighting against terrorism and extremism and radicalization.

In fighting with terrorism and radicalization, police should develop its relations with different classes of the society. Having better knowledge of these classes such as youth, women, minority groups, religious leaders, will improve the ability of the police to reach individuals or groups and consequently improve the effectiveness of the any crime prevention program (Eager, 2016).

**Engaging with Youth**

In many countries with young generation, youth engagement activities form the foundation of community-policing prac­tices. Community police officers can perform a key role either through their own autonomous works or by supporting existing youth outreach programs and the work of youth workers from both public author­ities and civil society organizations.

Although contacting young people is an easy task but most of the times it is difficult to engage with them. When young men and women have complaints against society and the state, this may lead to negative perceptions of society and therefore it becomes difficult for police to cope with these reluctant people. In many areas, this is accompanied with a history of poor relations between police and youth, espe­cially youth from ethnic minorities or underprivileged socio-economic back­grounds. In this context, unprofessional behavior of individual police officers and sometimes even systemic bias within the police against certain minorities are seen which prevent the construction of good and effective relationship between people and police.

Changing perceptions of the police among young men and women, and the perceptions of youth among the police, is a precondition for effective engage­ment and takes time. As the agents of the crime prevention programs, it is of critical importance and vital that in the first step, police understand young people and sympathize with them in the community and afford them the same respect and protect their rights in the same manner as they would with any other individual. If young people feel the police show respect to them, they are much more likely to be open to further contact and this helps police to prevent terrorism and extremism successfully (Lynch, 2013).

When police attempt to work with youth they can use some helpful approaches including:

* Organizing events in which young men and women can learn about and experience police activities;
* establishing a presence on social media to engage with young peo­ple;
* Supporting peer-mentoring schemes, whereby young people who have acquired some skills, perhaps in sports coaching, art classes, community art projects or other activities;
* Providing sports, fitness, art and other youth-focused activities as means of initiating contact, creating a platform for regular interaction;
* Inviting local young people to contribute to police training. Such initiatives provide an opportu­nity for both young people and the police to understand each other better and to share views on how young people may be affected by some police measures;
* Providing terrorism-prevention advice as part of gen­eral awareness-raising initiatives;
* Establishing educational programs or internships aimed at young people who may be interested in joining the police.

There is a limitless list of activities that police can use to engage with youth and have a good contact with them. Through these youth-engaging activities, police can provide anti-terrorism programs for young people and consequently prevent or detect any potential threats of within this population.

**Engaging with Women to Prevent Terrorism**

An important aspect of security is to understand the role of gender. Women security concerns are somehow different from men and are affected by conflict, terrorism and counterterrorism in different ways. Despite this, counterterror­ism strategies and measures have often been shaped with a gender bias.

There is a prevailing misconception that violent extremism and terrorism exclusively concern men. While the potential for women to be targeted for radicalization and involvement in violent extremist groups has long existed, it continues to be relatively underestimated and unaddressed. On the other hand, involvement of women as policy shapers, law enforcement officers, educators, community members and activists is essential for addressing conditions conducive to terrorism and the effective prevention of terrorism.

Eradicating the difficulties that hinder the active contribution of women in countering terrorism is essential because, women are members of communities and should be able to actively participate in initiatives designed to guarantee the security of their community. Meanwhile, women bring a different perspective to identifying and addressing specific political, social, economic, cultural or educational concerns that may lead to violent extremism and terrorist radicalization, in general, and among women and youth, in particular. There are some other some other reasons, for example, women are often victims of both terrorist attacks and counterter­rorism actions and they can point out when preventive practices are counterproductive and cause a aggressive reaction in their communities. This infor­mation can be decisive in avoiding creating or sustaining conditions that are conducive to terrorism. It should not be forgotten that women are effective participants in initiatives and can shape effective initiatives against extremism and terrorist radicalization and they may also be able to better reach out and influence other women and youth (Gill, Horgan,& Deckert, 2014).

**Engaging with Religious Sections**

In any counterterrorism work, there should not be any discrimination against any particular religion or belief. Terrorists and extremists usually bring a wide range of reasons to defend their actions, including religious con­siderations, but it should not be forgotten that religions are not responsible for terrorism.

However, in most countries especially in the middle east, religion is misused to most terroristic activities so it is important that for police to engage with religious leaders and organi­zations for a number of reasons, since some special religious communities may be possible targets of terrorist attacks; they can ask their advice for counter-terrorism efforts, especially from the ones who are affected by terrorism and radicalization; and they may have information about the people who are directly responsible for terrorist attack.

**Engaging with Ethnic Minorities**

In the present world in which most of societies are multicultural with lots of ethnic minorities, it is beneficial and important for the police to engage with these populations in a construc­tive manner in order to prevent terrorism. For example in Iran, police have attempted to engage with various ethnic minorities and religions via different channels. Police should not forget that their opportunity to effectively communicate with ethnic minorities on preventing terrorism will be limited, it is usually due to persistence of poor interaction and distrust between the police and ethnic minorities, especially as a result of dis­criminatory practices and police abuse against ethnic minorities.

The police can increase civil society organizations’ awareness of the wide range of activities through which they themselves can contribute to the pre­vention of terrorism. These include, for instance:

1. Raising awareness among the public about the nature of the terrorist threat and applicable laws and measures to prevent and combat terror­ism, and informing them of what communities and their members can do to protect themselves against terrorism (Parmar, 2011).

**Engaging Businesses Section**

Businesses section, in Iran we call it Bazaar sections, are a vital part of a country’s infrastructure and central to its income, employment and providing goods and services to people. Effective communication with this section in preventing terrorism is just as important for the police as engaging with individuals and civil society groups.

Bazaar can in many instances in Iran has become the target of terrorist attacks, and terrorists try to procure materials and equipment from businesses. While engagement by public authorities with large businesses may be organ­ized at a more centralized level, community police officers are well placed to engage with small and medium-sized businesses. It may be the case; how­ever, that engagement with businesses of any size in some countries does not fall within the remit of community police and will be geared explicitly towards intelligence gathering.

**Conclusion: Using community-policing in Iran to prevent terrorism**

Community policing is a philosophy of policing which is based on this concept that law enforcement forces and citizens communicate with each other in creative ways and in this way they try to solve the community problems and crimes especially in field of terroristic crimes.

In I.R. Iran, law enforcements by utilizing emergency numbers of 110 and 113, have attempted to communicate with people and citizens can call them in any situation and any time to ask for help or report any suspicious activities such as terrorism, extremism and radicalization.

The main purpose of the terrorism and extremism is to design and implement their extremist ideologies and by inducing fear and terror and utilizing personal impression of religion they have tried to dissimilate their false ideas around the globe via social networks and media.

For fighting against the process of terrorism and radicalization, IR Iran`s Police have utilized a community-oriented approach in some parts of their strategy for preventing terrorism. Boosting their communication with people and educating them via conducting cultural activities and measures such as publishing books, journals, essays; and holding exhibitions and fairs; producing movies and TV series and …, Iranian police have tried to link the community-oriented department of the police with operational departments and consequently fight against terrorism and prevent extremism and radicalization.

In this regard, we propose that training courses on the latest approaches and strategies of fighting against terrorism be hosted by one of the member of Interpa so that, all the members can adopt a standardized strategy in fighting with terrorism, extremism and radicalization.

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