

Local Solutions and Community-Oriented Policing

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In the global war on terror, focused on al-Qaeda and its affiliates, the primary tools we have employed have been kinetic. But while decapitation and tactical military gains have successfully reduced al-Qaeda operational space and capability, in the decade after the 9/11 attacks, there has been increasing realization across the globe that a longer-term strategy addressing the motivation for and recruitment to violent jihadism is equally necessary. Counter-radicalization programs, what the UN Working Group on Radicalization and Extremism describe as “package[s] of social, political, legal, educational and economic programmes specifically designed to deter disaffected (and possibly already radicalized) individuals from crossing the line and becoming terrorists”¹ have been implemented in countries from Saudi Arabia to the Netherlands. What any given ‘package’ consists of differs based on the country’s unique social and political makeup, as well as on what that country’s policymakers believe are the root causes of homegrown radicalization and recruitment (including self-recruitment) to violent extremism. In Muslim-majority countries such as Yemen, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia, theological (re-)education often plays an important role in programs to turn vulnerable individuals away from violent jihadism. In many countries of Europe, where the lack of assimilation of ethnic and religious minority communities and their low levels of access to state services are believed to contribute to the appeal of violent jihadism, civic integration and community-building projects play a bigger role.² For the United States, which has no official domestic counter-radicalization program in place, neither of these two models is perfectly transferable. In the first case, the US’s strong establishment clause makes state-promotion of certain interpretations of Islam unviable and unconstitutional. In the second, in contrast to Europe, Muslim communities in the US are well-integrated, much more mainstream, and have per capita incomes higher than the national average.³ The US, in the years after 9/11, has also faced a different, less lethal threat from homegrown terrorism in comparison to Europe.⁴

This paper will argue that despite the global trends towards implementing national counter-radicalization programs, the United States would not be well-served to implement a broad-based

¹ United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism: Inventory of State Programmes (2009)

² For a good description of all such programs, see Rabasa, Angel, et al. Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists, RAND Corporation, 2010

³ Ibid., p. 191. For a more detailed demographic portrait, see also Pew Research Center, “Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism,” August 2011

⁴ Jenkins, Brian. Stray Dogs and Virtual Armies, RAND Corporation, 2011

federal program aimed at countering radicalization and recruitment (including self-recruitment) to terrorism in Muslim communities. A case study of the UK's Prevent program highlights some of the potential pitfalls of such a program; while the spirit of their robust and proactive stand against radicalization is commendable, policies of the UK's Prevent program – described by one editorial as “widely unloved”⁵ – would likely be vilified even more by an American public. Furthermore, evidence seems to suggest that rather than helping to strengthen minority identification with the state, the UK counter-radicalization program only increased mistrust of and alienation from the state, and even fed perceptions that the government saw Muslims (broadly) as security threats instead of as equal citizens. Given what we now know about radicalization to violent extremism: its idiosyncratic nature and the lack of any consistent terrorist profile⁶, broad-brushed social efforts implemented from the top downwards, targeted at one particular community, are very likely to be ineffective if not counter-productive. Detecting and dissuading vulnerable individuals from becoming terrorists requires extremely local and tailored solutions – starting from close family and friends, stretching to broader social or religious circles, and the community at large.⁷ This paper argues that local government, community leaders, and civil society organizations are in a much better position vis-à-vis federal authorities to implement any type of counter-radicalization. This is for three primary reasons:

- 1) *Reach*: civil society and local authorities' on-the-ground presence and established relationships with communities, means they are well-placed to detect and monitor evolving threats. They also are more likely to have contextualized knowledge of what counter measures will work in a given community.
- 2) *Legitimacy*: top-down federal initiatives, however well-intentioned or designed, are often times tainted by politics and viewed with suspicion. In contrast to far-removed federal authorities, local actors often times have the trust and “social capital” to conduct effective targeted interventions.⁸

⁵ “Better than cure – but difficult” The Economist, June 9, 2011

⁶ Patel, Faiza, “Rethinking Radicalization,” Brennan Center at New York University School of Law, 2011. See also, Travis, Alan, “MI5 report challenges views on terrorism in Britain,” The Guardian, August 20, 2008

⁷ Jenkins, Brian, Stray Dogs Virtual Armies, RAND Corporation, 2011

⁸ The Change Institute, “Study on the best practices in cooperation between authorities and civil society with a view to the prevention and response to violent radicalization” Study commissioned by DG JLS of the European Commission, 2008

- 3) *Sustainability*: counter-radicalization is inherently a long-term project and requires sustained commitment by all parties involved. Unfortunately, it produces little in terms of concrete, measurable outputs. Federal partners may be well-placed to oversee short-term tactical counter-terrorism policies which have obvious deliverables, but in the absence of very strong political will, issues such as politicians' elections and project funding cycles make the national government not as likely to be reliable in long-term efforts.

Secondly, this paper also argues that a preventive law enforcement approach may produce more results than counter-radicalization in terms of stopping attacks. In fact, local law enforcement, working in conjunction with communities, has already been a tremendous part of stopping terrorist attacks in the US before they happen. Faiza Patel points to a study by the Institute of Homeland Security Solutions which examined 86 terrorist plots against U.S. targets between 1999 and 2009; 80 percent of the plots were foiled "via observations from law enforcement or the general public."⁹ Other articles have pointed out that up to one-third or one-half of terrorist attempts were stopped by local (Muslim) communities reporting activities to police.¹⁰ And surveys show that the more Muslim Americans believe that law enforcement personnel act fairly and legitimately, in reliable and non-discriminatory ways, the more willing they are to assist authorities' with their counterterrorism efforts.¹¹ As such, one policy recommendation this paper makes is strengthening the trust between Muslim Americans and American local security apparatuses.

But establishing trust between police and communities is easier said than done, particularly when the community in question feels that their relationship with the state is being securitized. The UK again serves as an example of how that relationship can go wrong, but in one case, that of the London Metropolitan Police's Muslim Contact Unit, also shows how community-oriented and community-sensitive policing did much to get the relationship right. The US, of course, has its own rich history of best and worst policing practices (particularly in relation to minorities) on which to draw.

⁹ Patel, Faiza, "Rethinking Radicalization," 2011

¹⁰ Jenkins, Brian, "Stray Dogs," 2011

¹¹ Muslim Public Affairs Council, "Building Bridges to Strengthen America," 2010. Accessible at: http://www.mpac.org/assets/docs/publications/building-bridges/MPAC-Building-Bridges--Complete_Unabridged_Paper.pdf, Accessed July 20, 2012.

Another reason for taking a stronger law enforcement approach to stopping terrorism is for counter-ideological purposes. Whatever the political or religious rhetoric or ideology acts of terrorism are cloaked in, the deliberate targeting and killing of innocent civilians is murder. By treating it as a criminal activity employed by criminals rather than martyrs, we can help to “[strip it] of its political and religious propaganda.”¹² In this aspect, the US can learn from the more law enforcement-based approach of other countries around the world. Furthermore, lack of clarity surrounding our wars in the Middle East and the War on Terror have created in our homeland something of a double standard regarding the tactic of terrorism, whereby “right-wing violence, for example, is dealt with as a matter of individual criminal activity, but Muslims are told that terrorism is an ideological problem, which they have a special responsibility to resolve.”¹³

Note that all this is not to detract from still crucial role that federal authorities have in monitoring and stopping what can be highly mobile, transnational terrorist networks or cells. Nor does it imply that, for the sake of political correctness or because of complacency, we can be blind to real threats and plots against American civilians, which still exist. But it is not always true that the better-funded and stronger state response is ipso facto more effective, particularly when it comes to countering radicalization. This is one of the lessons of the UK’s Prevent policy.

Lastly, as mentioned previously, effectiveness in the context of counter radicalization and prevention is difficult to measure. For instance, rates of foiled attacks will not be an indicator of programmatic success. For instance, absolute amounts of terrorist plots may go down as a result of counter radicalization policies, but successful law enforcement outreach might also mean that more Muslim Americans decide to report suspicious activity. “Success” in the context of counter-radicalization and terrorism prevention will not have the concrete metrics that policy-makers may wish for. Nevertheless, some goals of the local empowerment approach might be:

- Greater public resiliency. Terrorists seek to create fear and panic, and overreacting to their actions play straight into their cause. Psychological fortitude will come from an informed public that understands that zero-risk does not exist, knows what proactive

¹² Spalek, Dr. et al. Police-Muslim Engagement and Partnerships for the Purposes of Counterterrorism: An Examination, May 2009

¹³ Patel, Faiza and Kundnani, Arun, Counter-radicalization: Lessons from the United Kingdom – Commentary, Roll Call. July 28, 2011

steps it can take to prevent terrorism from occurring, and which will not be crippled even should terrorism occur.

- Better public understanding of the nature of radicalization. Stigmatizing communities does not play well to American strengths or values, and furthermore adds a layer of mistrust which complicates what need to be fact-based, rather than prejudice-based conversations about terrorism. This will also give Muslim (and other) communities greater space to do their part to help counter radicalization to violent extremism.
- Providing alternative activities to those who might be vulnerable to extremism. Though there is no straight pathway towards terrorism, providing youth with extra-curricular programs, or alienated immigrants with broad-based community-engagement opportunities, can be a good way of fostering civic identity. Such activities may also include providing safe and civil forums of dialogue for people to engage with others in discussions about their political concerns.
- Higher degrees of trust between police and communities, including better understanding by police of community concerns and better understanding by the community of police intentions and goals. This would also mean more avenues for police-community communication.

Note that building stronger communities, empowering grassroots actors and local government, and improving relations between police and minority communities, are all valuable investments beyond their value in countering and preventing terrorism.

The United Kingdom's Prevent

Prevent, the counter-radicalization component of the UK's counterterrorism strategy is cross-departmental project aimed at "stop[ping] people from becoming or supporting terrorists"¹⁴ The policy employs multiple state service sectors, from security to welfare, and is implemented on national, regional, as well as local levels.¹⁵ It employs statutory local partners like "youth Justice Boards, Youth Offending Teams, prisons and educational institutions" as well as civil society organizations.¹⁶ Prevent was first introduced in 2003 as part of the UK's official

¹⁴ HM Government, CONTEST: The UK's Strategy for Countering Terrorism, July 2011

¹⁵ Rascoff, Samuel J., "Establishing Official Islam?", Stanford Law Review, 2012

¹⁶ The Change Institute, "Study on best practices..." 2008

counterterrorism strategy, CONTEST, which was made updated and made public in 2006. While initial 2003 document remains classified, at its inception the ‘Prevent’ strategy was apparently based on the bottom-up idea that communities were best placed to decide how to implement counter-radicalization policies which suited their own contexts. Rather than “imposing values” from the top, the government was to play only an aiding role in “train[ing] and help[ing] to shape processes of engagement.”¹⁷

Until the 7/7 bombings, in which four British-born nationals with connections to al-Qaeda bombed the London metro, Prevent was perhaps the most neglected component of CONTEST, behind the three other P’s of Pursue, Protect, and Prepare. But as a result of those attacks, London began to look more introspectively at homegrown terrorism, and the Prevent component of CONTEST rapidly expanded. Prevent soon became a centerpiece of the UK’s domestic counter-terrorism policies, and was confirmed so in CONTEST-II, which was published in 2009.¹⁸ Having abandoned its initial spirit of bottom-up processes, Prevent became an unwieldy top-down project, with an agenda set too far and wide, and which restricted independent operating space for local actors. Criticisms of the 2009 Prevent policy led to a third revision in 2011. Though Prevent is clearly an evolving work-in-progress, taking a look at what have been the real and perceived policy shortfalls of Prevent will provide valuable lessons for the US. Some the key complaints about previous versions of Prevent were:

It had too broad an agenda. As mentioned, the UK government, like other western European countries, saw the lack of integration of ethnic and religious communities as a contributing factor to radicalization. The Prevent policy therefore involved itself in, co-opted and subsumed a number of community-cohesion and civic integration projects, and placed them under the umbrella of counter-terrorism. Doing so engendered feelings from Muslim community members that their entire relationship with the state was being securitized. The resultant suspicion and discontent served neither for the purposes of civic integration, nor for purposes of counter-terrorism work. The most recent version of CONTEST admits that the 2009 iteration was “flawed” in taking control of integration projects which had purpose and value “far wider

¹⁷ Lambert, Robert and Githens-Mazer, Jonathan. “Prevent is dead. What next?” The Guardian. 14 July 2010

¹⁸ Spalek, Basia, Counter-Terrorism: Community-Based Approaches to Preventing Terror Crime, 2012

than security and counter-terrorism.”¹⁹ Community cohesion projects were taken out of the new version as part of a ‘narrowing’ of Prevent’s focus.²⁰

There was also a great deal of institutional confusion in Prevent. By attempting to use community-cohesion projects to serve counter-terrorism purposes, Prevent:

“...oddly, put responsibility for counter-terrorism in the hands of Communities and Local Government (CLG), and community cohesion responsibilities in the hands of the police... on the one hand police involvement in Prevent seemed to be community focused, on the other CLG seemed to be reporting activities to the security services – which is backwards, and doesn't play to the strengths of either of these key institutions.”²¹

The mixing of what should have been the clear and separate functions of law enforcement and civic actors muddied waters, and compromised the effectiveness of one at the same time that it compromised the legitimacy of the other. Police can play a role in helping to build stronger communities, but it is not their primary function. Sir Norman Bettison of the UK’s Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) testified before the UK parliament that police were not in a position to take responsibility for counter-radicalization, tasked as they were with the other more traditional components of CONTEST: Protect, Prepare, as well as Pursue.²²

Institutional confusion also had a troubling effect on Muslim constituents, who “didn’t know who to trust or what to believe.”²³ The blurring of boundaries between public services and community projects on the one hand, and security-related police work on the other, led to widespread perceptions that the former was believing used in service of the latter, or that “community-integration work is just a cover for police snooping.”²⁴ One program in particular, Channel, typified all of these concerns.

Channel, first introduced in 2007, was an early prevention system designed to identify individuals at risk for radicalization (to any kind of extremism) and intervene once they reached

¹⁹ HM Government, CONTEST: The UK’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism, July 2011

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lambert, Robert, et al. “Prevent is dead. What next?” The Guardian. 14 July 2010

²² Communities and Local Government Committee of the UK Parliament, “Sixth Report - Preventing Violent Extremism,” 2010

²³ Lambert, Robert, et al. “Prevent is dead. What next?” The Guardian. 14 July 2010

²⁴ The Economist, “Better than cure – but difficult” June 9, 2011

a sufficient risk stage. A consortium of security officers, teachers, local community leaders, and others would then decide appropriate actions to take in each case.²⁵ Put in practice, there were serious concerns from the public that the program was being used for police surveillance and intelligence gathering, and was co-opting local community workers to help. British political activist Shami Chakrabarti went so far as to call it “the biggest spying programme in modern times and an affront to civil liberties.”²⁶ Nevertheless, there have been reports that organizations working on mental health or youth projects had been pressured to provide information to authorities about Muslim individuals (who had no terrorist history) to authorities as a condition for funding.²⁷ Police officials insist that ‘spying’ did not take place and that such accusations are a result of the public’s lack of understanding of the intelligence gathering process. Whether or not this is true, the House of CLG Committee reports that “the allegations are not only alienating individuals but deterring organizations from becoming involved to do good work in communities they serve.” There are many groups which thus refuse to take Prevent funding.

As for the referral system’s effectiveness, this is also questionable. The March 2010 official HM (Her Majesty’s) Government guide to Channel provides two anecdotal successes, one case in which a young convert was referred to Channel but later determined not to have extremist views, and another in which a boy was placed in a youth program for a radical comment made in class.²⁸ In other reported cases, a university student who attended a meeting about Gaza was labelled by a professor a potential extremist. A nine-year old child was also referred to authorities for “deprogramming.”²⁹ It is not clear whether such results have been worth the public antagonism engendered, or the hundreds of millions of pounds that Channel has received over the years. Interestingly, the city of Amsterdam program put in place a very similar referral system called the Information House. It was hailed by the US Presidential Task Force on

²⁵ Communities and Local Government Committee of the UK Parliament, “Sixth Report - Preventing Violent Extremism,” 2010

²⁶ Dodd, Vikram. “Government anti-terrorism strategy 'spies' on innocent” The Guardian, Oct 16, 2009

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ HM Government, ‘Channel: Supporting individuals vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists, A Guide for Local Partnerships,’ March 2010

²⁹ Dodd, Vikram. “Government anti-terrorism strategy 'spies' on innocent” The Guardian, Oct 16, 2009

Counter-Radicalization as a “good model” in 2009.³⁰ But that very December, Information Houses were closed “due to concerns about privacy.”³¹ They have not been reopened.

Another issue was that Prevent was focused on Muslims as a catch-all community. No community wants to face increased scrutiny by the state based solely on basis ethnic, cultural, or religious identity. Because of the actions of a few, whole communities of law-abiding citizens face increased profiling and even discrimination. Nevertheless, because of the nature of the jihadist threat, legitimate police investigations are often centered within Muslim communities. Some amount of discontent may be inevitable, but high profile police raids which yielded no substantive evidence that terrorism was being plotted, have heightened feelings by Muslims that they were being victimized, and have increased their reluctance to cooperate with officials in counter-terrorism work.³² While sensitive and community-conscious police practices are always necessary, more troubling from a policy perspective was that implementation of Prevent was based not on objective risk analyses, but rather on a highly simplistic view of what the ‘threat’ itself was. Under the 2009 Prevent, for instance, funds were merely allocated to localities with Muslim populations of over 2,000. When deciding which universities would receive attention under Prevent, this was based on the proportion of Muslims in the student body.³³ The effectiveness of such a blanket, unfocused policy is highly questionable. For instance, students, prisoners, and Somali youths – three groups which were “particularly vulnerable to radicalization,” saw very little attention under such funding policies. Likewise, a report points out that Durham university, despite having few Muslim students, had an very active campus presence of Hizb ut-Tahrir.”³⁴ Such a wide, unfocused reach could only play into feelings that the government saw all Muslims as potential terrorists, and also shows how Prevent became a top-driven process, with little understanding of community contexts and specifics.

Another criticism of Prevent was that it took sides on theological positions. Recognizing the role of religious doctrine and ideology in recruitment to terrorism, the government made partners not only of moderate Muslims, but also nonviolent Islamists, whom the government believed had

³⁰ Presidential Task Force, “Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counterradicalization,” March 2009

³¹ Abasa, et al. Deradicalizing Islamist Extremism, RAND Corporation, 148

³² Change Institute, “Study on the best practices...” 2008

³³ Communities and Local Government Committee of the UK Parliament, “Sixth Report - Preventing Violent Extremism,” 2010

³⁴ Ibid.

the religious and social credibility to counter the narrative of violent Islamism. Many in the broader secular public found this policy unpalatable, in that it legitimized and made partners of individuals and organizations who espoused “illiberal and anti-western ideologies”³⁵ This is not to say that programs by Islamists were not effective. For example, despite being controversial, STREET (Strategy to Reach, Educate and Empower Teenagers), a mentoring and tutoring program run by Salafists near the Brixton Mosque, has received positive feedback from probation officers and offenders.³⁶ Former counter-terrorism police specialist Robert Lambert said that STREET, thanks to “their street skills and religious integrity,” was successful in countering the recruitment activities of al-Qaeda-linked preachers in the neighborhood.³⁷ Lambert makes the case that “only nonviolent Islamist have the credibility to challenge the narrative of al-Qaeda and influence young Muslims who might be on the path to violent radicalism.”³⁸ Even if this is so, backlash from an unwilling public can make such partnerships politically impossible. In Prevent’s 2011 iteration, public money will no longer be provided to “extremist organizations who do not support the values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance of different faith groups.”³⁹ While political partnering with Islamists is highly contentious and overall not viable for the US, it will be argued in a later section that law enforcement personnel can and should engage with nonviolent Islamists for purposes of direct security.

Applicability to the United States: an argument against a federal program

A 2011 Bipartisan Policy Center study titled ‘Preventing Violent Radicalization in America,’ proposed implementing a counter-radicalization program in the United States modeled on the UK’s Prevent. The jury is still out on whether Prevent was successful in the UK, though from a popular opinion point of view, Prevent seems to have been a failure. But the aforementioned problems make a Prevent-like program likely to be even less successful in the United States. That UK citizens, who generally have higher threshold for considering state activity intrusive (take the example of CCTV cameras) had tremendous problems with early prevention systems like Channel – leads one to believe that the charges of spying would only be much worst in

³⁵ Vidino, Lorenzo, “Countering Radicalization in America – Lessons from Europe” USIP Special Report 2010

³⁶ The Economist, “Better than cure – but difficult,” June 9, 2011

³⁷ Vidino, “Countering Radicalization,” USIP Special Report 2010

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “The Prevent Strategy,” <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/review-of-prevent-strategy/>

America should similar national monitoring programs be implemented. Furthermore, strong respect for first amendment freedom of belief and of speech allows a comfortable margin of radicalism of all stripes in the United States; what is relevant for America in its struggle against terrorism is not extremism generally, but *violent* extremism. In this respect, many of Prevent's activities, which were designed to address to the former phenomenon rather than the latter, are simply not relevant for the US.

Americans also have a lower threshold for what is considered a waste of taxpayer money. That the UK government itself has published a statement admitting that 'money has been wasted' again bodes badly for a Prevent-like program to be implemented in the US. Also, our strong separation of church and state, enshrined through the establishment clause, limits the counter-ideological potential of any counter-radicalization program in the US to largely non-theological topics.⁴⁰ Even if religious (re-)education and moderate Islam can be used as a bulwark against violent jihadism in the US, that is by law out of the hands of federal officials.

Lastly, as mentioned, the UK faces a homegrown terrorist problem significantly different than that of the US. Back-of-the-envelope calculations by RAND's Brian Jenkins show that radicalization and recruitment to terrorism in Europe is no more frequent than in the United States, but since 9/11 Europe has suffered tremendous attacks, and its failed attempts have also been much more lethal quality than those uncovered and foiled in the US.⁴¹

In conclusion, countering homegrown radicalization – in theory a necessary complement to kinetic (domestic) counterterrorism activity – would not at all be well-served by a national program. As new research points out, profiles, indicators, and pathways to terrorism are too diffuse create national policies that can counter what are often very idiosyncratic decisions to commit acts of political violence and harm innocent civilians. Radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism is not a community phenomenon, but an individual one.⁴² As such, it is those closest to vulnerable individuals, families and friends, that are best placed to detect and dissuade would-be terrorists, and from there social networks, communities, and civil society operating at

⁴⁰ For more on this topic, see Samuel J. Rascott's "Establishing Official Islam?" in Stanford Law Review, 2010

⁴¹ Jenkins, "Stray Dogs," 2011, 8

⁴² Jenkins, "Stray Dogs," 2011, 26

grassroots levels. It does not seem that federal authorities, given their limited penetrability and legitimacy, would be effective in outreaching a heavy hand in this process.

Community-Oriented Policing and Critical Engagement

As mentioned previously, prevention of terrorism through law enforcement may have more tangible results than counter-radicalization policies. But as was evident in the case of the UK, the relationship between police and the communities from which terrorists may come are often marked by mutual mistrust and suspicion. This stems from unequal power relations between the state and people, often much more pronounced in communities that have historically faced discrimination, such as new immigrants, or ethnic/religious minorities. Under Prevent, much police work was characterized by targeting rather than engaging communities, which likely only furthered those communities' alienation from the state apparatus. On the other hand, there were examples in the UK where police genuinely partnered with local actors to achieve tangible, meaningful results. The Muslim Contact Unit provides one example of effective community policing practices that built solid relations between authorities and communities.

The Muslim Contact Unit was a specialized counter-terrorism unit set up by the Scotland Yard as an intermediary to better relations between the London Metropolitan Police and members of the Muslim community.⁴³ Its staff is drawn from the Counter Terrorism Command, and include both Muslim and non-Muslim police officers. Unlike other police activities which widened the gap between the security apparatus and community, the MCU was able to establish "joint ownership with Muslim civil society organizations," in ways that neither compromised the legitimacy of those institutions, nor overstepped the bounds of police work.⁴⁴ More than mere rhetoric, they built genuine partnerships with civic actors, and they behaved in ways that were conscious and respectful of community sensitivities and values. According to one study which interviewed Muslim community members in London, most participants expressed supportive for the MCU, some of who regularly engaged with MCU officers voluntarily, and in other cases even "building working partnerships" with them.⁴⁵ Massoud Shajareh, chair of the London-based

⁴³ Muslims in Britain, "11.3 Muslim Community Resources" <http://guide.muslimsinbritain.org/guide11.html>. Accessed on July 14, 2012

⁴⁴ The Change Institute, "Study on the best practices..." 2008

⁴⁵ Spalek, Basia, Dr. et al. "Police-Muslim Engagement and Partnerships for the Purposes of Counter-Terrorism: an examination." 2009

Islamic Human Rights Commission, which advocates against alleged police discrimination and harassment of Muslims, has reviewed the MCU positively: “Out of all the Metropolitan police, this... deals with the issue of Muslims on facts rather than on Islamophobic perceptions.” Azad Ali, former Chairman of the Muslim Safety Forum, where Islamic community representatives and senior police officers meet to discuss concerns, has similarly expressed that, “[The MCU has] done a lot of good work in reassuring communities.”⁴⁶

More tangibly, the MCU was also able to facilitate the changeover from al-Qaeda linked leadership in a mosque in north London.⁴⁷ But overall, the success of the MCU has been its ability to establish a groundwork of trust where other police initiatives in the politically-charged environment have often engendered increased hostility from Muslim communities. This was achieved through a variety of methods:

Firstly, the MCU was very clear and honest about its security role. MCU officers apparently openly tell members of the community that they are a special counterterrorism unit, and do not try to hide their function or mission. Honesty of intentions are crucial for communities that face a “climate of fear generated by counter-terror laws and operations,” and less clearly defined police initiatives may be viewed with suspicion.⁴⁸ A second component of MCU’s success is its use of local Muslim police officers, who are able to bring first-hand knowledge of the communities from which they come, utilizing their “social and cultural capital” to help the MCU gain trust with mosque communities.⁴⁹ The MCU makes it clear that they are working in the service of Muslim communities as much as anyone else, and take seriously the grievances of Muslim communities in terms of hate crime, discrimination, and Islamophobia.⁵⁰

More controversially, the MCU has not shied away from building partnerships with Salafists or Islamists. This again has drawn criticism from some who believe that partnering with Islamists lends them legitimacy.⁵¹ This author believes, however, that there is a difference between engaging with Islamists on the political level, and engaging with Islamists for purposes

⁴⁶ Dodd, Vikram, “Special Branch to track Muslims across UK,” *The Guardian*, July 20, 2005

⁴⁷ Spalek, Basia, Dr. et al. “Police-Muslim Engagement and Partnerships” 2009

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Thiel, Darren. “It is Art not science: the revised prevent strategy,” <http://soundings.mcb.org.uk/?p=108>, Accessed on July 13, 2012

of direct security. One might note, for instance, the highly effective policy of Indonesia's special police counterterrorism unit, Detachment 88, of engaging with and partnering with former terrorists (many of whom remain radical Islamists) to create a counter-narrative against radicalization in Indonesia.⁵² (Indonesia's widely hailed counterterrorism efforts are also based on "law enforcement, prosecution and the judicial process. We do not use the military approach."⁵³)

Law enforcement in the United States historically has also made security partners out of those who might be considered 'politically' untenable. For instance, LAPD's work with former gang members turned gang interventionists was controversial, but as former LAPD Chief Bratton noted, "once we started trying to find ways to work with them...the community began to see us in a different way."⁵⁴ The argument for this type of critical engagement is premised on the idea that those vulnerable to radicalization (or gang involvement) respond best to those that have been in their shoes. As Abdul Haqq Baker, the Salafi founder of the STREET program says, "If [individuals vulnerable to radicalization] cannot relate to you, if your lifestyle doesn't resonate, they will not accept anything from you."⁵⁵ The MCU, under the leadership of Robert Lambert, strongly believed in such partnerships as one of the most effective counter-terrorism tools. As mentioned previously, there are dangers and difficulties in working with Islamists on a policy level – namely the risk of empowering those actors and their illiberal ideas. However, from the standpoint of pure security, conscientious engagement (not empowerment) can be of use in both countering radicalization and terrorism.

As a specialist counterterrorism unit focused on building bridging relations between the authorities and Muslim communities, the MCU has also engaged Muslim communities on a broader social level. MCU officers have not only attended terrorism seminars and related activities organized by community members, but have even visited people's homes for social

⁵² RAND, *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists*, 114. See also Shulze, Kirsten E. "Indonesia's Approach to Jihadist deradicalization," *CTC Sentinel*, July 2008

⁵³ Quote from the commander of Detachment 88, from Abuza, Zachary, "Indonesian Counter-Terrorism: The Great Leap Forward" *Jamestown Foundation: Terrorism Monitor* Volume 8, Issue 2 (2010)

⁵⁴ "U.K. and U.S. Approaches to Countering Radicalization: Intelligence, Communities, and the Internet." *The Council on Foreign Relations*, 2011

⁵⁵ Rosenberg, Tina. "Going to Extremes," *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2011

gatherings, and attended weddings and funerals of community members.⁵⁶ That they have established bonds of trust with Muslim community members to such a degree is highly interesting given the nature of their work, but this shows that respectful and sensitive police work which approaches communities from a position of equal footing can be very effective in building bridges. It also shows that while communities hate to feel securitized or subject to top-down surveillance, they nevertheless desire access to credible partners in the state who are interested in protecting and serving the interests of everyone's safety. As one senior police official in the UK put it:

“It is not about spying. It's about policing; it's not just about being nice to communities. You protect them against Islamophobia, and work with Muslims to protect them against extremists. Ultimately all communities want positive relations with the police. Around many Muslim communities the cultural gulf with the police has been wide. You need dedicated staff.”⁵⁷

It should be noted that the case of MCU is small-scale, and has not been attempted to be expanded. One former officer of the MCU notes that the successes of the group can only be seen in “marginal, individual cases that have no impact on wider perceptible trends.” However, some ‘street level’ police officers as well as Muslim community groups believe that it’s a “complementary” counterterrorism tool that might be mainstreamed and integrated into the national strategy, requiring only moderate resourcing.⁵⁸

Overall, there should be an emphasis on establishing trust. As mentioned previously, Muslim communities in America have so far been key partners in alerting authorities to terrorist attacks. Increasing their trust in law enforcement authorities through community-oriented practices will only serve to enhance that. For instance, one study conducted at New York University found “a robust correlation between perceptions of procedural justice and both perceived legitimacy and

⁵⁶ Spalek, Basia, Dr. et al. “Police-Muslim Engagement and Partnerships” 2009

⁵⁷ Dodd, Vikram, “Special Branch...” The Guardian, July 20, 2005

⁵⁸ Change Institute, “Study on the best practices...” 2008

willingness to cooperate among Muslim American communities in the context of antiterrorism policing.”⁵⁹

Again, local actors and law enforcement are well-placed to build trust and reach out to their own communities to gain their cooperation in detecting and preventing terrorist plots. Federal entities, however much their expertise is necessary for breaking up networks and cells, are by nature less suited to engage in community-oriented policing or outreach, which requires sustained relationships and communication.⁶⁰ Faiza Patel writes even that there are indications that FBI outreach efforts “may even be counterproductive insofar as they are used to gather information about community members’ religious behaviors and beliefs.”⁶¹ She points out that money used for federal outreach efforts might be better served being spent developing a national dialogue with Muslim American leaders, or investing in more localized engagement efforts.⁶²

Building positive relationships with communities also has tactical use in gathering necessary intelligence. In contrast to intelligence-led policing, which relies heavily on few trusted informants, community-oriented policing’s emphasis on broader community partnerships can use broader and contextualized pieces of information to form more fuller and more holistic intelligence assessments.⁶³ Trust-building aspects of community-oriented policing have less perceived and real detrimental impacts to democratic values.

In the United States, units with more specialized counterterrorism expertise and cultural nuance might work well in tandem with regular police.⁶⁴ Law enforcement agencies will always be well-served to have some expertise in language ability or in cultural skills. Part of this may be having regular cultural training for police officers. Another may be having police forces which properly reflect an ethnic or religious community’s makeup.⁶⁵ Such individuals, who come from the communities in which they work, might better understand the concerns of that community, and will be able to communicate those concerns to allow police to better serve the public. These

⁵⁹ Tyler, Tom. “Legitimacy and Deterrence Effects in Counter-Terrorism Policing: A Study of Muslim Americans,” *Law and Society Review*, 2010

⁶⁰ MPAC, *Building Bridges*, 2010, and Patel, Faiza, “Rethinking Radicalization,” 2011

⁶¹ Patel, Faiza, “Rethinking Radicalization,” 2011

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ MPAC, *Building Bridges*, 2010

⁶⁴ Spalek, Basia, Dr. et al. “Police-Muslim Engagement and Partnerships” 2009

⁶⁵ Patel, Faiza, “Rethinking Radicalization,” 2011

personnel can also speak out against biases or misperceptions within their police agencies.⁶⁶ In the absence of recruits with intimate understandings of community needs, another option is the creation of community liaison positions. Already some local agencies use liaisons to assist with law enforcement in vulnerable groups. Such liaisons, who speak the cultural language of a given community, serve dually to bring to the department's attention the community's needs, and also to disseminate information from law enforcement to the community.⁶⁷

None of this is particularly new to American police and law enforcement apparatuses. After decades of policy-minority relations marked by mistrust, community-policing practices developed in recognition that the most effective police work often sought partnerships and local buy-in. Community-oriented policing became a dominant policing paradigm by the 1980s and 1990s, and became the official federal policy under the 1994 Crime Bill.⁶⁸ It should not be too far a stretch to extend its applicability to police engagement with Muslim communities as well.

Reexamining police-minority relations and practices employed for gang violence prevention might be instructive. For instance, former Chief of Police William Bratton recalled when the LAPD was "literally an occupying force in LA and almost at war with the African-American community."⁶⁹ He said that it wasn't until the late 1980s and 1990s, when community-oriented policing practices were introduced, that the situation began to change. Success began to be seen in the extent to which police could form partnerships with communities, "the leadership, [and] understanding diverse aspects of it."⁷⁰ Chief Bratton has also asserted that the model is still applicable today: "...some of our newer immigrants' communities feel very much alienated. They're self-segregated into various communities. There's where I don't believe the federal government has the answer – I think it has to come from community-led outreach and community-led policing."⁷¹

⁶⁶ Brynen, Rex, "Diaspora Populations and Security Issues in Host Countries," Accessed at: <http://international.metropolis.net/events/croatia/brynen.pdf>, on August 4, 2012

⁶⁷ COPS, "Protecting your community from terrorism, Vol 2: Working with Diverse Communities," 2004

⁶⁸ Thacher, David. "Conflicting Values in Community Policing," *Law and Society Review*, Vol. 35, 4 (2001)

⁶⁹ "U.K. and U.S. Approaches to Countering Radicalization: Intelligence, Communities, and the Internet." The Council on Foreign Relations, 2011

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "U.K. and U.S. Approaches." CFR 2011

Engagement does not mean approaching local actors from a position of authority or power. It means approaching them on an equal footing. In one particular case in the 1990s, the Boston Police Department negotiated with African-American church leaders, who set boundaries of “fairness and respect,” including refraining from “indiscriminate and abusive methods” in policing behavior in exchange for their backing on anti-gang initiatives. Partnering with local church leaders helped to create an ‘umbrella of legitimacy’ under which such initiatives were implemented, and under which positive police-community relations were sustained.⁷²

Older models of law enforcement partnering with communities in the United States are still highly applicable and valuable for today’s challenges. This is not to say that the old issues have been solved; many would argue that mutual suspicions between police and minorities still persist. There are also other problems associated with community-policing, namely that getting involved in community affairs and forming relations with communities may compromise police political neutrality. Critics point to the dangers of community-oriented policing ranging from “political entanglements” when police may be asked to take sides in community conflicts, to citizens “gaining control over the police.”⁷³ Perhaps the biggest risk is that because community-oriented policing requires highly localized solutions and innovative problem-solving, law enforcement must have expanded authority to use their own discretion in making decisions.⁷⁴ No two communities are the same, and there are no cookie cutter solutions for building trust and forming meaningful partnerships with local actors. But it is also precisely because of this that local police and law enforcement’s use of community-oriented and community-sensitive practices can have such a force-multiplying effect on assisting federal efforts to detect and prevent terrorist plots.

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⁷² Thacher, David, “Conflicting Values,” 2001

⁷³ Mirsky, Ian. “Community Oriented Policing,” Internet Journal of Criminology, 2009

⁷⁴ Ibid. See also, Wesiburg, David, and Eck, John E., “What can police do to reduce crime, disorder, and fear?,” Annals, American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 593 (1), 2004

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