

A SWOT ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY POLICING
AS A REFORM SCHEMA FOR THE EGYPTIAN NATIONAL POLICE
TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

by

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Abstract

Like much of the Middle East and Africa, Egypt has been experiencing increasing incidents of extremist violence and terrorism in recent years. However, an effective methodology for addressing this violence has not been identified. One approach that has been promoted internationally is countering violent extremism through community policing.

This paper will assess the merits of community policing as a methodology for countering violent extremism in post-revolutionary Egypt. For the purposes of this paper, countering violent extremism was conceptually defined as policies and preventive strategies employed with the intent to hinder the progression of terrorist groups and their activities. To provide context I included a working definition of community policing based on historical implementation of the practice. The characteristics of Egypt and its culture were outlined as they relate to Egypt's susceptibility to community policing principles and programs, based on both research and from personal experience living in Egypt and working with the Egyptian National Police Force for two years during the transition from the Hosni Mubarak regime, through the revolution, and subsequent overthrow of Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected president. I categorized my research into four key areas – Post-Mubark Egypt, the Egyptian National Police, Community Policing, and Countering Violent Extremism.

In order to better formalize my analysis and validate subsequent deductions, I integrated my research data into a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) matrix. Ultimately, I found that the Egyptian National Police are ill-prepared to implement community policing, whether it would be effective in countering violent extremism or not. However, through my research I was able to identify key areas that could be addressed. The paper concludes with

implications and recommendations in two key areas: a) Implications for Egypt and the Egyptian National Police, and b) Implications for program design for police reform efforts.

Descriptors: Community Policing, Egypt, Countering Violent Extremism, SWOT.

PREVIEW

Dedication

There are many who have contributed to my academic career, some of whom I will try to thank in the acknowledgements section. However, there is only one person who stands above the others, to whom this paper must be dedicated – my wife Tauna. Tauna has been by my side and supported me through three college degrees, in three different states, and over three decades: a Bachelor's degree in Justice Administration at Brigham Young University when we were first married; a Master of Public Administration degree at California State University Long Beach while I was working full-time as a police officer and she was trying to raise our young family; and finally a doctoral degree in Criminal Justice at the University at Albany in New York. My doctoral program took a disconcerting sixteen years to complete, as I spent much of the time working on police reform projects overseas. Throughout it all however, Tauna not only supported me, but told me to “hang in there” the many times I had considered quitting. She encouraged me, she pushed me, and even served as my proof-reader through many iterations of this paper. This dissertation is as much Tauna's effort as it is mine.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study	1
Background of the Study	2
Problem Statement	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	7
Conceptual Framework	8
Nature of the Study	9
Limitations	9
Significance of the Study	11
Significance to Theory	12
Significance to Practice	12
Significance to Social Change	13
Summary	13
Chapter 2: Research Method	14
Research Design and Rationale	14
Role of the Researcher	15
Instrumentation	16
Structure	18
Issues of Trustworthiness	19

Credibility	19
Transferability	19
Dependability	20
Confirmability	21
Summary	21
Chapter 3: Post-Mubarak Egypt.....	22
Egypt 22	
Demographics	23
Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak	23
Mohammed Morsi.....	26
Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.....	27
Rise in Terrorism	29
Summary and Key Points.....	34
Key Points.....	36
Chapter 4: Egyptian National Police.....	41
Police Reform	50
Leahy 56	
Summary and Key Points.....	60
Key Points.....	61
Chapter 5: Community Policing	67
Community Policing Defined	68
Community Policing Implementation.....	71
Community Policing in Egypt	73

Summary and Key Points.....	79
Key Points.....	79
Chapter 6: Countering Violent Extremism	84
Extremism.....	84
Countering Violent Extremism.....	87
Community Policing to Counter Violent Extremism.....	89
Summary and Key Points.....	96
Key Points.....	97
Chapter 7: SWOT Analysis	101
Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix.....	105
External Factor Evaluation Matrix.....	109
Chapter 8: Discussion and Recommendations.....	113
Findings.....	113
Interpretation of Findings	113
Implications and Recommendations	115
1. Implications for Egypt and the Egyptian National Police	116
2. Implications for Program Design for Police Reform Efforts.....	117
Conclusions.....	120
References.....	122
Appendix A: Ministry of Interior Organizational Chart.....	133
Appendix B: Code of Ethics & Conduct.....	134
Appendix C: Al Wahda Interview with Brigadier General Asser Negm Eldin	138
Appendix D: Kidnapping Newscast - Community Policing.....	142

Appendix E: Incentive Program for Community Policing Research Initiatives.....	143
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PREVIEW

List of Tables

Table 1 - Regional assignments of Egyptian police officials trained in community policing.....	74
Table 2- Egyptian police progress toward adopting community policing	75
Table 3 - Categorization of Key Chapter Points	102
Table 4 - Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix	106
Table 5 - External Factor Evaluation Matrix	109

PREVIEW

List of Figures

Figure 1 – Escalation of Terror Attacks in Egypt	32
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PREVIEW

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Like much of the Middle East and Africa, Egypt has been experiencing increasing incidents of extremist violence and terrorism in recent years. However, an effective methodology for addressing this violence has not yet been identified. One approach that has been promoted is community policing to counter violent extremism. This paper will assess the merits of community policing as a methodology for countering violent extremism in post-revolutionary Egypt. For the purposes of this paper, countering violent extremism is conceptually defined as policies and preventive strategies employed with the intent to hinder the progression of terrorist groups and their activities. To provide context I will include a working definition of community policing based on historical implementation of the practice. The characteristics of Egypt and its culture will be outlined as they relate to Egypt's susceptibility to community policing principles and programs. This will be based on both research and from personal experience living in Egypt and working with the Egyptian National Police Force for two years during the transition from the Hosni Mubarak regime, through the revolution, and subsequent overthrow of Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected president. I will evaluate international research related to the principles/practices of community policing in order to contribute to understanding the merits of community policing as an apt approach for the Egyptian National Police to counter violent extremism.

In order to better formalize my analysis and validate subsequent deductions, I will integrate my research data into a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analytical matrix. With this collective information, I hope to develop some conclusions as to whether or not there are justifiable merits for implementing community policing, specifically in Egypt, for contending with violent extremism.

Background of the Study

From 2011 to 2013, I had the opportunity to work for the US Department of State (DOS) managing a project in Egypt to introduce community policing to the Egyptian National Police. The project was initially proposed by DOS to the Egyptian National Police towards the end of the regime of former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak in the last quarter of 2010. However, before the training was able to get under way, the Egyptian revolution of January 2011 toppled Mubarak, and the ensuing chaos exposed the brutality of his security force to international scrutiny. This game-changing event created a whole new stage for community policing training to be introduced in Egypt. The training was under way by June 2011. However, it was implemented during a very tumultuous period that included the first free elections in Egypt, and a new president – Mohamed Morsi; and ultimately a second revolution and a “coup” that ousted Morsi after only one year in office. Because of the challenging social and political climate, the training was only provided to select executives, mid-level managers and instructors from the Egyptian National Police. Although the training project was very limited in scope, it was gratifying to witness the principles of community policing being received with great enthusiasm by training participants.

Unfortunately, by June 2013 only about 450 Egyptian National Police personnel were provided community policing-related training (Waddington, 2013), out of a commissioned police force that numbers in the hundreds of thousands (almost a million more non-commissioned). Consequently, other than anecdotal incidents of community policing efforts, no comprehensive community policing-focused police reform was evident and DOS determined to end its funding of the community policing training project.

Since the overthrow of Morsi in June 2013, the security situation in Egypt has deteriorated such that the Egyptian National Police has not felt the time has been right to embrace community policing. I was told by one Egyptian National Police official that “with all the violence, now is not the time to be soft on policing, we need to demonstrate a strong hand.” Prior to June 2013, it was rare to hear of any incidents that could be categorized as terrorism or violent extremism in Egypt (although the revolutions were accompanied with many protests, riots, and violent skirmishes with the Egyptian National Police). However, since Morsi’s ouster, attacks and bombings by radical Islamic fundamentalists (particularly Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, or ABM) have significantly increased, totaling thousands of police and civilian deaths and injuries. The levels of violence since 2013 and the diverse composition of the groups taking part are unprecedented in Egypt’s modern history (Awad & Hashem, 2015; Dunne & Williamson, 2014b).

In the face of this violence, the question remains as to whether or not community policing can/should be a legitimate reform methodology for the Egyptian National Police, even in the midst of the current state of violent extremism. Noteworthy is that over the past several years, there have been admonitions that community policing may be strategic to addressing violent extremism (Newman & Clarke, 2010; Spalek, 2010; Stohl, 2008).

After the tragedies of 9/11 the United States and its allies implemented a military campaign, or “War on Terror”, to try and eradicate radical Islamic terrorist organizations. However, changing international political and social exigencies have dictated that the War on Terror give way to a less aggressive approach. Subsequently, an approach of “Countering Violent Extremism” has evolved (Holmer, 2013). Instead of military targeting of terrorists and their organizations, countering violent extremism employs preventive strategies intended to

hinder the progression of terrorist groups and their activities. International agencies, including the United Nations and the United States Government, are focusing more funding and effort toward countering violent extremism projects, and have even created a countering violent extremism section within the State Bureau of Counter Terrorism (Hudson, 2016). Additionally, international organizations focused on countering violent extremism, such as the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and the Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (Hedayah), have emerged to provide countering violent extremism dialogue and training. Countering violent extremism projects include police training/reform, community engagement and empowerment of women, to name a few (Countering Violent Extremism Working Group, 2014). Due to the nature of these goals, community policing has been seen as a logical construct for police reform efforts to counter violent extremism (Friedmann & Cannon, 2007).

A community policing approach goes beyond a narrow focus on crime; the philosophy proposes that police and communities work together in partnership to address community concerns (Community Policing Consortium, 1994). Unfortunately, although on its face community policing would appear to be a logical model for implementing police reform in support of countering violent extremism, community policing is difficult to implement. In truth, it is challenging in the best of circumstances, but particularly in these troubled Islamic countries. The social, political and security challenges in these countries make mutual cooperation between communities and the police as necessitated by community policing very difficult to achieve.

Egypt is not alone. On the heels of the War on Terror, authoritarian leaders have been deposed or challenged throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. Major protests have broken out in other countries as well, including Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan – all primarily Islamic societies.

This wave of revolution has been referred to as the “Arab Spring” (Dalacoura, 2012). This revolutionary process has destabilized internal security in these countries and made them more susceptible to the influence and actions of radical Islamic groups. The United States, United Nations, and other foreign donors invest billions of dollars to assist in police reform efforts and to address terrorism and extremism in these countries. However, little has been done to systematically assess if there is a likelihood of success of these investments.

Problem Statement

The problem under consideration is that terrorism/extremism is a growing threat in Egypt. Global fatalities from acts of terrorism rose 30% in 2014, compared to the previous five-year average, according to a global risk analytics company, Verisk Maplecroft. They also identified Egypt as one of the countries seeing the most significant increases in the risk of terrorist attacks (Maplecroft, 2015).

International donors invest heavily into security sector reform (SSR) efforts with the hope of countering this threat. However, the threat and associated violence in Egypt continues to grow rather than subside (Awad & Hashem, 2015). The United States has funded community policing training programs for the police in Egypt, but have been hesitant to invest more if there is no evidence of return on its investment (Waddington, 2013). If there is any hope in countering terrorism and extremism, a more thoughtful approach must be taken. Comprehensive assessments of their potential value to the targeted locale should be attempted before implementing security sector reform methodologies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to explore and understand Community Policing as an approach for Countering Violent Extremism in Egypt. Since starting this dissertation journey and focusing on the potential of community policing for countering violent extremism in Egypt, I recently came across an article whose author underscores the need for the research I propose here. Brian Katulis, a senior fellow for national security at the Center for American Progress states:

“One country that needs to move to the top of the agenda in the effort to counter violent extremism and defeat terrorist networks is Egypt. Egypt’s the most populous country in the Middle East with a population pushing up to close to 90 million, and it has had a historical role as an incubator of some of the radical Islamist groups and opinion formers that helped create the global al Qaeda movement. Egypt is geographically central in the region – between Israel and the Gaza Strip to the east and a disintegrating Libya to the west, it faces regional security pressures... [In Egypt] there are institutions to work with and a certain sense of national unity that is lacking in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen... In the broader fight against violent extremists, Egypt is a key centerpiece of the struggle and we need to get this right.”(Katulis, 2015)

A reform strategy that has been “vetted and tested” as proposed in this paper can provide impetus for change that could potentially reduce violence and extremism in Egypt. In addition to the significance to Egypt itself, Egypt’s ability to stabilize and successfully emerge from the Arab Spring could provide a pivotal example to other countries in the region suffering from post-revolutionary violence and extremism.

Research Questions

My research is multi-faceted. Several important variables must be considered, as well as how they potentially impact each other. This leads to several research questions. The following questions will guide this study:

1. Does international research related to the principles/practices of community policing and reported outcomes associated with its implementation support community policing as an apt approach to counter violent extremism?
 - There have been numerous studies that analyze community policing implementation and outcomes. Additionally, there has been a substantial amount of writing promoting community policing as a methodology to counter violent extremism. I will look to those to determine whether or not existing research can support the premise of community policing as an appropriate security sector reform methodology to counter violent extremism.
2. Is the Egyptian National Police force capable of implementing community policing principles and programs?
 - Egypt has gone through substantial political and internal upheaval since the revolution of 2011. I will assess police capabilities as they relate to community policing, as well as the susceptibility of Egyptian culture and people to community policing.
3. Does community policing have the potential of stemming the tide of violent extremism in Egypt?
 - I will look not only at current capabilities, but the greater potential of community policing as a means of countering violent extremism in Egypt.

The intent is to develop conclusions as to whether or not there are justifiable merits of community policing as a reform schema for the Egyptian National police to counter violent extremism. This will be based on both research and personal experience living in Egypt and working with the Egyptian National Police on a community policing project over a two-year period.

Conceptual Framework

When a patient is ill, doctors assess the symptoms and draw on their experience and the research that has been conducted related to the illness to prescribe the best possible treatment. This process, which is not limited to the medical field, has been referred to as abductive reasoning (Magnani, 1992). Abduction is “characterized by a ‘backward flow’ of inferences across a chain of directed relations that identify initial conditions from which the current abstract representation of the problem originates. This provides tentative solutions to the problem at hand by way of hypotheses” (Patel, Arocha, & Zhang, 2005, p. 730).

Such is the nature of my study. If one were to look at Egypt as a patient and I as her physician, it would be incumbent upon me to consider existing research and studies that have been conducted with various treatments/remedies for “patients” with similar ailments. I would take into consideration my understanding of my patient, her medical history and specific needs. I would draw on personal experience working with other patients with similar symptoms. I would take this data *in toto* to determine if the standard prescribed treatment is appropriate for my patient. For example, if a patient has symptoms indicating an infection, a standard medical response would be to prescribe one of the many forms of antibiotics. However, there are those who are allergic to some antibiotics, such as penicillin. So, penicillin would not be an appropriate treatment for such an individual. Understanding the patient is critical to treatment.

For most scientists, abductive reasoning is a natural and instinctive process, a series of educated guesses, building upon observed phenomena and previous studies. For my study I will draw on a number of analyses and conclusions, from a multitude of sources, such as literature reviews, related research and personal experience and observations, and consolidate them into a comprehensive assessment. With that I hope to determine if community policing is an appropriate prescription for Egypt to address its ailment of violent extremism.

Nature of the Study

My research is a qualitative case study assessing the Egyptian National Police force, existing research on community policing, Egypt culture, and countering violent extremism. I compiled international research findings as they relate to community policing implementation and outcomes. I evaluated them from a viewpoint of implementation in Egypt. Accordingly, I also compiled research related to Egypt and its national police force so as to consider community policing implementation in a more specific, rather than a generic context. Additionally, I drew significantly upon personal experience implementing community policing programs internationally and working with the Egyptian National Police for two years immediately after Mubarak's resignation as Egypt's president.

Limitations

There are several limitations that I must take into account in going forward with my research. First, there are a couple of considerations inherent in case studies.

1. *Concern that case studies lack rigor:* Case studies have been viewed in the evaluation and research fields as less rigorous than surveys or other methods. Reasons for this

include the fact that qualitative research in general is still considered unscientific by some and in many cases, case study researchers have not been systematic in their data collection or have allowed bias in their findings. In conducting and writing case studies, care must be used in being systematic in data collection and steps must be taken to ensure validity and reliability in the study.

2. *Not generalizable*: A common complaint about case studies is that it is difficult to generalize from one case to another. But case studies have also been prone to overgeneralization, which comes from selecting a few examples and assuming without material evidence that they are typical or representative of the population (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006, p. 6). However, as Bennett and Elman have noted, qualitative research methods presently enjoy “an almost unprecedented popularity and vitality...”, such that they are now “indisputably prominent, if not pre-eminent” (Bennett & Elman, 2010, p. 499). They suggest that this is due to the considerable advantages that case study methods in particular have to offer in studying the “complex and relatively unstructured and infrequent phenomena that lie at the heart of the subfield” (Bennett & Elman, 2007, p. 171). The nature of my study is much like this, in that it attempts to address a unique unstructured phenomenon, which has no hard data from which to draw. Consequently, I will rely on a variety of sources (similar research, peer review literature, personal observations, etc.) to build my case study.
3. *Researcher bias*: My own subjective feelings and observations could influence the case study. A lot depends on my interpretation of the information acquired. By necessity my assessment was a solo one. A “real world” assessment such as the one presented here should be by committee and include not only technical expertise by law enforcement

officials, but also input and oversight from public officials with political experience and engagement at high levels in government (Lewis, 2011).

I also understand that incorporating a SWOT matrix into the research itself has potential limitations. SWOT organizes the data in such a way as to identify internal and external factors favorable/unfavorable for the program to succeed; however, the categorization of the data into the matrix will necessarily be somewhat subjective (the SWOT analysis is discussed in greater detail in the *Research Method* section in the following chapter).

Another limitation is that I am attempting to analyze something that, as of yet, has not been implemented to a degree that it could be directly assessed. Community policing has not been implemented in any meaningful way in Egypt so as to measure its effectiveness as a countering violent extremism methodology. The essence of my research is to provide predictive analysis for the *potential* of community policing as a countering violent extremism methodology in Egypt.

Significance of the Study

One of the more unique characteristics of my study is that it is presumptive in nature. Typically, dissertations and associated research evaluate the possible effects that independent variables may have on dependent variables, whether incorporating a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach. However, these studies are conducted after the fact by using available data, or developing new data that assess effects related to phenomena.

For my study, I evaluate a program for a locale in which it has not been meaningfully implemented. I am looking at the *potential* of the program. I am accumulating the research and findings on Egypt, community policing, and countering violent extremism to structure

reasonable assumptions as to whether or not community policing *could be* effective if implemented.

Significance to Theory

Current theory espouses community policing as a viable methodology for countering violent extremism (*Workshop to Develop a Plan of Action for Community-Oriented Policing as a Tool for Countering Violent Extremism*, 2014), but limited research has been published that breaks down the viability of community policing in a specific context/locale such as Egypt in advance of implementation. My research should either help to substantiate the viability of community policing for countering violent extremism, or bring into question the validity of this theory.

Significance to Practice

For many years I have worked directly on security sector reform projects that have been funded through various means of foreign assistance. I have evaluated a host of other government funded requests for information (RFI) and requests for proposals (RFP) as well. Rarely were these efforts premised upon research that validates the proposed reform methodology. More typically they are based upon political (both donor and host country) and budgetary exigency.

My paper introduces a different approach in security sector reform projects. It suggests the value of substantial research and assessment prior to launching such programs. This has the potential of:

- Greater understanding of the target environment and capabilities of the host country/agency.
- Establishing a sounder foundation for project implementation.