

Community Policing in Indigenous Communities



Edited by
Mahesh K. Nalla and Graeme R. Newman



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Contents

Foreword	ix
Contributors	xiii
Introduction	xxvii

Section I

AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

1	Bahrain	3
	STACI STROBL	
2	Gambia	15
	PA MUSA JOBARTEH	
3	Lebanon: Community Policing in Nahr al Bared Refugee Camp	23
	NABIL OUASSINI	
4	Madagascar	31
	JONAH RATSIMBAZAFY, MEREDITH L. GORE, AND LALA JEAN RAKOTONIAINA	
5	Niger	41
	LISBET ILKJAER	
6	Nigeria	49
	IKUTEYIJO OLUSEGUN LANRE AND AYODELE JAMES OLABISI	
7	South Africa	59
	ANTHONY MINNAAR	

Section II

THE AMERICAS

- | | | |
|-----------|--|------------|
| 8 | Argentina
MARK UNGAR | 73 |
| 9 | Canada: Aboriginal
DON CLAIRMONT | 83 |
| 10 | Canada: The Annapolis Valley
ANTHONY THOMSON AND DON CLAIRMONT | 91 |
| 11 | Chile
MARY FRAN T. MALONE | 99 |
| 12 | Mexico
ROY FENOFF AND KARINA GARCIA | 107 |
| 13 | Peru
JOHN S. GITLITZ | 117 |
| 14 | Trinidad and Tobago
VAUGHN J. CRICHLOW | 123 |
| 15 | United States: Indigenous Communities
SUSAN GADE | 131 |

Section III

ASIA AND OCEANIA

- | | | |
|-----------|--|------------|
| 16 | Afghanistan: <i>Police e Mardumi</i>, Indigenous Civilian Policing at District Level
DOEL MUKERJEE AND MUSHTAQ RAHIM | 141 |
| 17 | Australia
ELAINE BARCLAY AND JOHN SCOTT | 153 |
| 18 | Bangladesh
M. ENAMUL HUQ | 163 |

19	China	169
	LENA Y. ZHONG AND SHANHE JIANG	
20	India	179
	MAHESH K. NALLA AND GRAEME R. NEWMAN	
21	New Zealand	189
	GREG NEWBOLD AND L. THOMAS WINFREE, JR.	
22	Philippines	201
	RAYMUND E. NARAG	
23	South Korea	213
	WOOK KANG AND MAHESH K. NALLA	
24	Thailand	221
	SUTHAM COBKIT (CHEURPRAKOBKIT)	
 <i>Section IV</i>		
EUROPE		
25	Croatia	231
	KRUNOSLAV BOROVEC AND SANJA KUTNJAK IVKOVIĆ	
26	Finland	247
	SIRPA VIRTÄ	
27	Germany	257
	THOMAS FELTES	
28	Italy	267
	STEFANO CANEPPELE	
29	The Republic of Moldova	275
	EVGHENI FLOREA	
30	Netherlands	287
	ARIE VAN SLUIS AND PETER VAN OS	

31	Northern Ireland	297
	GRAHAM ELLISON	
32	Poland	309
	EMIL W. PŁYWACZEWSKI AND IZABELA NOWICKA	
33	Serbia	319
	ZVONIMIR IVANOVIĆ AND SERGEJ ULJANOV	
34	Slovenia	327
	MAJA JERE, GORAZD MEŠKO, AND ANDREJ SOTLAR	
35	Spain	339
	JUAN JOSE MEDINA ARIZA AND ESTER BLAY	
36	Turkey	349
	KAAN BOKE	

Foreword

The group of words, *police*, *polity*, *politics*, *politic*, *political*, *politician* is a good example of delicate distinctions.

Maitland 1885: 105

This important book traces, and makes explicit, much of the variety of policing that takes place today under the sign of “community policing” across the globe. By doing so, it provides a very useful counterweight to the wealth of research and writing that has taken place within Anglo-American societies, where the term “community policing” originated. While “community policing” has been used in a variety of ways within this Anglo-American context, perhaps the most central meaning has been that it refers to policing that takes place with the active support of citizens. This idea of what is often termed “consensual policing” fits closely with the second of the nine principles of good policing that have been ascribed to Sir Robert Peel—the Secretary of State at the time the London Metropolitan Police were established in 1829. This principle, as Reith (1948) reports it, is as follows:

To recognize always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions, and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.

Reith 1948: 64

What the chapters in this volume make clear is that this idea is one that has had widespread appeal and is one that has been practiced in many different ways in many different places long before it was associated with “community policing.” What has “traveled” (Karstedt 2002), and traveled widely, is not the idea but the sign that is increasingly being used to refer to it in many diverse contexts. This idea, as Graham Ellison notes in this volume, was nicely brought to the fore by the Independent Commission of Policing in Northern Ireland (1999) via their phrase “policing with the community.” In the Commission’s report, which sets out a blueprint for reimagining policing in Northern Ireland, it became apparent that the term “community policing” is, as often as not, used to inspire police to practice forms of policing that are “inclusive” rather than “extractive” (Acemonglu and Robinson 2012). As the Northern Ireland example makes clear, this is very often the case in situations of conflict where established forms of policing have been used to enforce orders that are associated with domination. In these contexts, as several of the chapters in this volume make clear, established policing arrangements have often been about imposing an order that is not supported by many, and often most, of those being policed.

In broadening the focus of inquiry into “community policing” as widely as the chapters of this book do, Mahesh K. Nalla and Graeme R. Newman have assembled a book that is not only important, but also courageous. It is courageous because, in encouraging thought about what “community policing” is, and might be, in societies that have not been consensually ordered, it steps outside of established conceptual frameworks. This book

seeks to move “community policing” beyond what Ericson et al. (1993) termed a “hurrah” word, which carries with it warm connotative meanings that have been employed to paper over denotative difficulties.* In doing so, Nalla and Newman have sought to open up a new genre of research and thinking on “community policing” that recognizes that the term itself, along with the policing it is used to promote, is often enmeshed in political and analytic quagmires that deserve to be identified and explored.

I write these words soon after the Marikana miners massacre in South Africa (Herskovitz 2012), where police are members of a police organization explicitly committed, as Minnaar notes in his chapter, to a philosophy of “community policing” but who, in this instance, acted in ways that display little evidence of consensual ordering. What these events, and similar ones that can be found across the globe on a daily basis, remind us is that community policing, where it exists, is very often practiced within a context of significant conflicts and contested and “negotiated orders” (Henry and McAra 2012). And again, as many of the essays in this volume make clear, these conflicts are often very much what the advocates of community policing seek to manage by drawing communities into the business of policing.

By being willing to delve deeply into these contested spaces, both the editors and chapter authors, take us on a journey that goes a long way toward moving us beyond the “hurrah” connotations that have so often enveloped analyses of community policing.

The lens Nalla and Newman have chosen to enable us to access policing within societies where orders are contested are societies in which indigenous communities live alongside others—often others who have been their colonizers. This is a difficult territory to traverse. It is the editors’ and authors’ willingness to explore the idea of community policing within contested contexts that makes this book both important and courageous.

What the chapters of this book repeatedly recognize is that indigenous communities are typically communities that challenge and contest the orders and laws of the nation states of which they have become, often very reluctantly, a part. Through the case studies that comprise the chapters, this book explores community policing, its meanings and practices, as a feature of the policing of what are often very deeply divided societies.

In the case studies that are the foci of the chapters to follow, community policing is revealed as a strategy, not simply for policing with consent but for policing in contexts within which there is often little, if any, consent. This shifts the discussion of “community policing” from Ericson et al.’s “hurrah” status to one that reveals the complexities of policing within the complex and contested settings that characterize our contemporary world. In this world, consent is something that cannot be taken for granted, and, whenever it exists, it is always a hard-won accomplishment. It is these accomplishments of cooperation and consent that constitute the subject matter of many of the chapters. This is a book about whether, and how, more inclusive forms of policing might be practiced.

In this book, community policing is revealed as an aspirational practice that, it is hoped, will enable police and communities, within contested contexts, to cooperate in a variety of ways that will recognize that, even within deeply contested spaces, there are often many win-win gains to be made that will enable communities to live within spaces in which they can live, work, and play in relative safety. In a contested world of conflict and compromise, community policing is revealed as a set of normative aspirations that

* It is worth citing Ericson et al.’s (1993: 47) words here: “Community policing offers boosterism, a feel-good politics in the vein of quality-of-life advertising. It does so by associating ‘community’ with other hurrah words such as ‘progress’ and ‘democracy’...”

sometimes can find concrete expression. Implicit throughout these chapters is an ongoing analysis of the conditions under which the hope of community policing might be realized.

What this analysis reveals is that community policing, in the real world of contested orders, is much more than the simple idea that policing with consent suggests. Community policing is revealed as a strategy for realizing small but significant accommodations within a context of often-fundamental disagreement. In doing so, the chapters of this book say something about the nature of day-to-day conflicts within the context of contested orders and the nuanced patterns of agreements that established boundaries within which life can sometimes be lived in relative, albeit fragile, safety. In the chapters to follow, we find discussions of the variety of ways in which the tensions that contesting of orders generates are recognized and negotiated in ways that sometimes give rise to possibilities of peace—albeit “peaces” (Maitland 1885) that may well be limited in both space and time. In doing so, these analyses recognize the complex and nuanced role that police can, and do, play in these contexts.

In these chapters, one often finds that what community policing arrangements make possible is often not police “policing with communities” but rather “policing by communities,” in contexts of negotiated orders and disagreements about orders, that sometimes involves the police. What these chapters reveal, in the variety of settings on which they report, is a complex field of nodal policing characterized by shifting policing assemblages. Sometimes these processes and the assemblages that they constitute bring state police and the institutions of policing within communities closer together, but this is not always the case. Often, nodal policing arrangements established boundaries between policing agencies and policing assemblages. These boundaries often prove to be important for creating spaces of peace, even though they often also create tensions between agencies that may or may not be well managed. The boundaries, the crossing of these boundaries, the creation of policing assemblages, and so on constitute the features of nodal policing, features that these chapters reveal. An example—one among many—of this is provided by the chapter on Peru, where the authors consider how indigenous forms of policing coexist with state policing. In this analysis, we find a challenge to what Johnston and I have recently termed the “fallacy of nodal-network equivalence” (Shearing and Johnston 2010), namely, a challenge to the notion, often associated with ideas of community policing, that community policing involves the creation of integrated policing networks. While this is sometimes the case when state policing is undertaken “with communities,” it is often not the case, especially when policing is undertaken “by communities.”

In its “hurrah” form, conceptions of community policing have tended to assume that different sources of policing—different auspices and providers—can be made to align nicely with each other in ways that enable policing to be cooperative and networked. What the chapters in this book make clear is that, while this is sometimes the case, it is often not the case. Community policing understood as “policing by communities” often involves the emergence of sets of policing nodes that operate together, and sometimes even cooperate, not because collaboration dominates but because nodes find ways of managing tensions that arise from very different conceptions of order and the methods to be used in maintaining them. Within these nodal arrangements, auspices and providers of policing sometimes cooperate; at other times, they are indifferent to each other, and sometimes they contest each other, at times very vigorously. From the vantage point of this lens, community policing becomes a sign that covers a wide variety of policing engagements within nodal fields in which the state is recognized as one node among many. The comparative perspective that this book affords readers is one that compels us to recognize the enormous diversity of practices that are, and can be, arranged under the sign “community policing.” In opening up the exploration of “community policing”

in this way, the authors in this book compel us to “bracket” taken-for-granted assumptions about what community policing is and require us to use the lens of contested policing to explore a wide variety of ways in which communities can, and do, engage in policing.

In doing so, these chapters remind us of Robert Reiner’s (2010: 32–36) insistence that policing is, by definition, fundamentally political. This is so, as he makes clear, because order is fundamentally political. What Reiner argues, and what this book demonstrates, is that policing, our hopes and aspirations for it notwithstanding, does not exist above politics but rather as part of, and because of, politics. It is precisely this insight that is so clearly understood by many of the authors of this volume. Policing, and the struggles that surround it, is an inevitable feature of ordering and the various inequalities that orders maintain.

To suggest, as I have done, that as policing scholars, we need to leave behind the normative veils that so often limit our ability to empirically scrutinize the worlds we study does not mean that we should not empirically explore the normative stances that shape policing. Values and ideals are a crucial feature of policing precisely because policing is so thoroughly political. This means that to understand the “politics of policing,” it is essential to examine the normative layering that shapes policing activities by both those who seek to legitimize it and those who would discredit it.

As researchers, analysts, and theorists, we not only study the worlds in which we, and others, live, we also shape these worlds through our understandings and the analyses that promote them. As actors who constitute, as well as study, worlds, it is incumbent upon us not only to study politics but also to take political stances.

What the chapters in this book, each in different ways, do is to ask how the ideals that have informed community policing might be best used to promote policing, in the context of contests over order, which are the rule, not the exception, across the world.

Clifford Shearing

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He won the Distinguished International Scholar Award of the International Division, American Society of Criminology (San Diego, 1997). Many times, he was a guest lecturer or visiting professor at 54 universities in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, France, Greece, India, Japan, China, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Italy, South Korea, the United States, Switzerland, and Finland. He also

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As a perspective student, he visited the University of Illinois at Chicago and Chicago Police Department in July 1994 and published an article considering the relation between the phenomena of juvenile delinquency and civil war. Between April and May 2003, he visited Washington DC, Austin, Albuquerque, Seattle, and New York regarding the "Security Issues" program for law enforcement officers.

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Introduction

Although in proposing this book to our publisher, we used the standard definition of community policing developed by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services of the United States (COPS), that community policing has three components: community partnerships, organizational transformation, and problem solving, we did not present this definition to our authors because we thought it too narrow. That's right. Too narrow. We wanted, in contrast to the critics of community policing who consider it to be a term that is so broad as to be meaningless, to demonstrate that its breadth is actually its depth. Looked at globally, community policing does not always or even often follow the COPS prescription; rather, it has emerged as a product of the physical environments and cultures in many different locations around the world. This book shows that community policing is far from meaningless. The diversity of description and analysis of community policing in the array of cultures presented here demonstrates the opposite: community policing is full to overflowing with meaning.

The idea of community policing—and it is an idea—is most difficult to grasp because it means different things to different people. We understood this from the start, so when we approached potential contributors to the book, we prepared a brief list of topics we wanted them to cover: the origin of community policing in the indigenous community, how does community policing work there, what community police actually do, the relationship of community policing to the criminal justice system, and finally, the effectiveness of community policing. Many of our contributors more or less complied with this list, but many did not. Being experienced editors, we anticipated this. The intent of our list was not so much to force authors to organize their chapter in a particular way (though it would have been nice) but to create a particular viewpoint that we hoped the author would adopt: the idea that the roots of community policing might be found in indigenous communities.

What we did not anticipate, however, was that the term “indigenous communities” would be more difficult for authors than the term “community policing.” We were initially disappointed when quite a few chapters came in that did not appear to address the indigenous community aspect of community policing at all. Then we realized that in some cultures with more than a thousand years of recorded history, it was a matter of conjecture at what point in history one could clearly identify the indigenous community. Were the people that lived in Germany, for example, prior to occupation by the ancient Romans the true indigenous communities, and anything after that an imposition? Is the complexion of German policing today indigenous—a reflection of the imposition of ancient Roman rule? That is, at what point in history are indigenous cultures the reflection of the imposition of a policing style by an occupier?

Colonial imposition of policing styles and organization are the preoccupation of many of the chapters on Africa and Asia, given the comparatively recent history of colonial rule by the British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish. The authors of some of these chapters are usually at pains to point out that community policing—or something like it, a kind

of romantic notion of informal justice at the village level—preceded the typical militaristic model of policing used by colonial powers to impose law and order in their colonies. In some countries, this colonial model has overwhelmed the former informal justice system of indigenous communities to the extent that those forms of justice have all but disappeared. This is so in cases where the colonial powers, particularly the British, co-opted or transformed the existing informal policing structures into their own centralized militaristic and bureaucratic styles of policing and justice. A number of the African chapters demonstrate this process clearly.

It is popular these days to view this colonial imposition as all bad, that something valuable was lost when the colonial powers imposed their systems of justice on indigenous communities. It is certainly true that the past is the only resource we humans have in order to understand ourselves as people. So to lose any of the past is an awful loss. This is why great cultures and civilizations keep extensive records of their histories. It is also why it is a tragedy when a culture is lost completely or reduced to a small glimmer of what it once was, for whatever reason: colonialism, globalization, economic development, and so forth. The remnants of such cultures these days are referred to as “minorities.” These minorities may remain in place in the face of cultural destruction, or they may try to take their cultures with them when they migrate to a more attractive place and become immigrant communities. Either way, they present a challenge to policing, and it is of considerable interest that a number of our chapters address this issue: community policing is used as a vehicle to connect with minorities, to exploit or enhance the partially lost informal justice systems in minority communities. This role of community policing is well demonstrated in the chapters on Canada and Australia.

Other countries, in contrast, have embraced the colonial style of policing once they achieved independence, recognizing that it was the most efficient way to structure a community fractured by social change and rapid economic development. The chapter on Bahrain is such an example. At issue is the problem of maintaining an efficient economic system in a global economy, which requires a centralized governmental structure. The emergence of nation-states toward the end of the nineteenth century demands a centralized government in order to deal with the global demands of trade and economic development. The chapter on India exemplifies this incompatibility, perhaps even a paradox. India, a young and independent nation-state that is rapidly emerging as a world power, has struggled mightily to cope with indigenous policing in its vast rural and tribal areas. There have been attempts to impose or even replace indigenous informal policing structures in rural India with a more formal style, but these often failed and ended up reverting to the indigenous structures. In other tribal areas, attempts have been made to “modernize” the indigenous policing through education and other kinds of outreach but to leave the actual structure of the informal justice system in place. India stands out as a vast laboratory for experimenting with a diverse range of indigenous community policing styles because of its huge rural population and naturally decentralized mechanisms of control that were mostly left in place by the British, if not exploited by them.

Similarly, there a number of chapters where community policing has been used in an effort to return policing to the people, to attempt to maintain a centralized command structure but to designate local police offices and stations as those that should connect with the local community. In fact, at least from the chapters in this volume, this role of community policing is probably the most dominant one: a vehicle for softening the militarized or bureaucratically centralized administration of policing in many countries, especially those

that either are economically well developed or are countries recently emerged from non-democratic rule. In other words, community policing is seen as synonymous to “reform.” What exactly, though, does reform mean when community policing is used as its vehicle?

The popular answer to this question is to point to the “top-down”–“bottom-up” paradox of policing reform. Can community policing be imposed from above, or must it emerge from the bottom up, that is, involve from the very beginning local (indigenous?) communities. Herein lies the very crux of policing in modern society. The ideal would be (and it is the romantic image of indigenous societies) that small communities can police themselves, that there would be no need for police as we think of them, uniformed, patrolling, ordering. There have been many real-life experiments in this regard, some of which are well described in this volume. The most difficult experiment, still ongoing, has been that of policing in Northern Ireland, with its history of self-policing during times of political conflict. Parallel justice systems emerged—complete with police patrols and punishment of offenders—often violent. Similar “vigilante” policing occurred in Mexico, Peru, and Argentina over a period of years preceding eventual democratic rule.

The civilized version of parallel justice in “respectable” community policing is, of course, neighborhood watch. Even here, though, the line between watching and punishing is thin indeed. In most assessments of community policing in chapters on developed countries, neighborhood involvement of some kind is seen as an essential element of community policing. Yet in almost all chapters that describe this reform process, there is an element, sometimes identified, sometimes hidden, of suspicion from both sides: the old policing guard views citizens as potential offenders, so any collaboration with them is seen as weakness, which is certainly a mistaken view. And even the reform advocates insist on strict rules and training of citizens who will join neighborhood watch in order to avoid neighborhood watch becoming too much like police—that is, usurping their prerogative to use violence. So it must be said that in no instances where community policing was used as a reform vehicle did its style emerge from the bottom up. In every case, it was a top-down reform.

Of course, the ideal of community policing is for citizens and police to work together—for there to be a bottom-up and top-down approach working in partnership. But how can this occur, for example, in communities full of gang or tribal violence, demoralized by poverty or scarce resources? One doubts that this ideal can ever be reached for the simple reason that, as the author of the Northern Ireland chapter observed, community policing works best where it is least needed, that is to say, in communities where there is mutual trust between citizen and citizen and between police and citizen. In other words, communities that hardly need policing at all. Sounds wonderful, until one realizes that it was exactly this style that was used by Mafia organizations in Chicago and New York in the early part of the twentieth century and long before in southern Italy. That is to say, protection of citizens is a racket. One must pay a price for protection. The only issue is to whom?

To think of modern police as a kind of protection racket is, of course, outrageous, though it does help explain the chronic disease of corruption that seems to attack many police forces around the world. At issue here is the question of how crime is viewed in modern society compared to indigenous (local) communities. Nation-states in which all modern policing operates demand that the state itself is the victim of crime and that the immediate or actual victim is secondary, or even the excuse for the state to exert its force on the offender. Viewed in this light, community policing appears to be quite a threat to the nation-state, for it shifts emphasis considerably onto the immediate or potential

victims of crimes and, in some versions of community policing, works hard to help citizens to avoid becoming victims. Perhaps this is why community policing has been difficult to introduce as a reform measure in nations that are used to the state playing a large direct role in prosecution, investigation, and punishment of offenders both operationally and legally, such as, for example, many of the east European states and South Africa where, the author tells us, community policing was tried and eventually abandoned.

If our foregoing discussion seems rather too cerebral, there is a reason for it. Why not address the practical question: does community policing work or not? Very few authors were able to cite empirical research that showed convincingly that community policing “worked” in their particular communities. Apart from the problem of specifying what the criteria for success would be in evaluating the effectiveness of community policing, even when the objectives of any project were specified, there was little empirical research to show that they were achieved. Yet, in almost every case, authors concluded that community policing would be continued and that its objectives were laudable and desirable, even if their effectiveness could not be verified. We take this as evidence that community policing in the communities covered in this book is accepted on faith, and that it is an idea with intrinsic merit. One could hardly get more cerebral than that.

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Africa and the Middle East

I

Contents

Colonial Legacy of Policing in Bahrain	4
State Building and the Suppression of Indigenous Practices	6
Promise of Community Policing in Bahrain	6
Strange Coupling of Community Policing and Paramilitarism	7
Can Bahraini Police Mediation Be Considered Indigenous Community Policing?	8
What Is Modern Is Better: Downplaying Indigenous Practices	11
References	13

Community policing is a broad strategy that has been adopted by many police forces around the world. Rather than merely responding to crimes after they occur, the strategy involves taking a proactive approach to the problems police encounter in their day-to-day duties while also strengthening the ties between the citizen and the police. After a police professional movement that had isolated officers in a detached, patrol-car-dominated modus operandi, community policing emerged in the 1980s in the United States as a means of grounding policing in local communities. It necessitated the devolution of some police discretion to local precincts and neighborhoods, increased police transparency and accountability, focused on public relations, reinstated foot patrols, and facilitated police–community meetings, among other activities. Because of the globalization of police professional networks in the 1990s, with the Internet and the proliferation of international police conferences, many forces around the world developed or adopted their own community policing strategies, creating nothing less than a global community policing movement.

Bahrain, a small country located on a desert archipelago off the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf, boasts being the first Arab country to adopt the community policing strategy in its daily police operations in 2005. It was considered to be a means by which the community could be more involved in the coproduction of public safety in the context of a developing state. Modern state-dominated policing in Bahrain did not have its advent until the 1920s, and many indigenous community-based criminal justice practices were not phased out until decades after that. However, the new community policing movement is almost entirely a product from Western societies, ignoring the kinds of indigenous practices such as mediation by trusted tribal or village elders. An additional irony has surfaced since the beginning of the Bahrain Spring in early 2011. Since then, the government has been actively using the police to suppress political opposition through the use of heavy-handed riot forces to put down demonstrations and night raids on the homes of political opposition figures to arrest them for antigovernment activity. Paramilitary police techniques have resulted in the deaths of 35 people (13 from fired tear gas canisters) and injuries to approximately 3000 (*New York Times* 2012). Despite this police-related violence, the community policing unit continues to act as a representative of a police force that touts cooperation with Bahraini communities.

This historical account of community-based and community-oriented policing in Bahrain emphasizes the ironic rise of community policing at the same time that a parallel trend of paramilitary policing has occurred. It suggests that indigenous practices that could help bind the national police and the community are being forgotten in favor of Western-style approaches to community-police relations, which struggle for legitimacy in light of the paramilitary policing of the Bahrain Spring. Postcolonial spaces like Bahrain are often hybrid in nature, featuring both imperially imposed institutional transplants and demised, but not dead, local practices (Abu-Lughod 1998; Said 1993; Spivak 1999). Looking for indigenous policing in Bahrain, then, is to focus on the limited use of traditional forms of mediation to resolve disputes reported to police, a practice that is increasingly atypical and not placed under the umbrella of community policing. As such, the police have not correctly identified their most grassroots and community-based practice as community policing, engaging in a kind of institutional forgetting of what community has traditionally meant in favor of a state-based and Western-transplanted notion of community-oriented policing.

Colonial Legacy of Policing in Bahrain

Bahrain is a small Muslim country, which is home to a population of approximately 1.2 million people (Central Intelligence Agency 2012). It is a constitutional monarchy under King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifah, a Sunni Muslim monarch in a majority Shi'a Muslim state.* Much of the country's wealth during the twentieth century was derived from exploiting oil and natural gas deposits, as well as refining oil, although this industry is now in decline due to resource depletion. Bahrain's police force consists of approximately 3000 primarily Sunni officers, many of whom are foreign born. Approximately 5% of the forces are policewomen (Strobl 2011). Contemporary policing in the country is the product of the modernization efforts of the British during the colonial period of the early twentieth century, during which Bahrain had protectorate status within the larger empire.

The British usurped control from precolonial means of maintaining order in society based on tribal and kinship networks in favor of a more centralized consolidation of police functions in the colonial state. Treaties between the British and the Al-Khalifah tribe were signed in 1861, 1880, and 1882. Political agents dispatched from London, along with the long-standing British political advisor to the monarchy, Sir Charles Belgrave, institutionalized a uniformed police force, loosely based on the Royal Irish Constabulary, while slowly edging out indigenous forms of policing. From the mid-1920s until 1955, Belgrave served as the commandant of the newly created State Police. Although his memoir indicates that he hoped to employ indigenous people in the police, most of the police personnel during

* In the seventh century, Islam split into two major sects after a dispute over who should follow the Prophet Muhammad in leadership of the Muslim people. Those who would become Sunnis supported Abu Bakr, a trusted advisor to the prophet, while those who became Shi'a felt that 'Ali, his son-in-law, was the correct ruler (Esposito 1988). In Bahrain, sectarianism has been a force that has split the nation socially, politically, and economically. Shi'a, many of whom are of Persian origin, have lived on the island for centuries. Meanwhile, Sunnis, who form the ruling elite, are the product of Sunni presence on the island since the eighteenth century. Shi'a are more likely to be unemployed, and overall have less wealth, than the Sunnis. Shi'a are the majority of the country's inhabitants but are disenfranchised from the political process (Strobl 2011).

Belgrave's tenure were foreign born and often manumitted slaves, from around the British Empire (Belgrave 1960). As with many colonial forces around the world, the police acted as a local military, used to defend the colonial state from external threats, in addition to providing local law and order. As such, London instructed the Bahraini police in the activities of intelligence gathering, security, and training. By the 1960s, many officers in the top ranks of the police were British nationals who were shoring up the force for eventual departure at the time of decolonization (Sinclair and Williams 2007).

In precolonial Bahrain, tribes were united by honor and loyalty to a patriarchal and hereditary social structure (Lienhardt 2001). The prevalence of tribal structure persisted for some time through the colonial period, particularly in rural communities. As the historian J. E. Peterson (1991) explains:

...the tribe was central to the individual's existence: in many ways it formed something of a self-contained entity, politically, economically, and certainly socially. Allegiance to a larger state structure was ephemeral, produced either by force or transitory self-interest. (p. 1437)

Disputes within tribes were handled by an all-male council (*majlis*) of tribal leaders (*shaykhs*) who would hear the grievances of people wronged and rule as to the tribal response. Sanctions and solutions to wrongdoing were enforced by the council as the chief protectors of the safety of their people. Routine consultation on decision making with other adult males in the tribe maintained the legitimacy of the *shaykhs* within the *majlis* (Khuri 1980). Conflicts related to Muslim law (*shari'ah*) were handled in consultation with the local *qadi* (customary judge) and his circle of *ulema*, or learned elite (Onley and Khalaf 2007). Self-appointed third-party mediators also often emerged to solve conflicts before they were brought to the *majlis* and *ulema* (Lienhardt 2001).

Traditional conflict resolution practices in the Gulf are connected to larger Arab and Muslim notions of "sensitive symbolics" (Yassine 1999, p. 7). Quranic injunctions instruct Muslims to keep the peace among themselves, hence the need for *hal wassat* (solution as middle way). Because of the Arab cultural primacy of honor (*sharaf*) to one's reputation, and the interconnectedness of the individual's reputation with the larger family, clan, or tribe, face-saving techniques are preferred to overt conflict. Helping the parties in "saving face" (*dakhilah*)* is a major part of the role of an Arab mediator. Traditionally, Arab mediation (*wisatah*) is face-to-face and personal and eschews putting anything in writing. It is distinct from other forms of traditional dispute resolution involving religious authorities: mediation as *takhim* (arbitration), which has occurred around conflicts of religious succession, or *qadi* justice, which is dispute resolution by a Muslim judge or scholar (Yassine 1999). However, in the Gulf context, it appears that *wisatah* is not as distinct an activity and involves any dispute resolution engaged in by *shaykhs*, *qadis*, or *ulema*. The use of *takhim* is not reported in accounts of Gulf dispute resolution related to crime and deviance, but rather, it is used in commercial disputes.

According to Arabian Gulf ethnographer Peter Lienhardt (2001), who immersed himself in the remaining traditional clans in the region in the 1950s, the cultural preference is for nonviolent solutions to wrongdoing, including crimes of an intertribal nature. He found that most frequently occurring intertribal crimes were sea piracy, Bedouin raids,

* *Dakhilah* is more literally translated as "inner self," but Arab mediators translate it functionally as "saving face" (Yassine 1999).

and the evasion of tolls owed to local *shaykhs*. In the cases of intertribal murder, traditional Bahrainis followed the rule of *damna was damhum wahid, daynna wa daynhum wahid* (our blood is their blood, our debt is their debt), meaning that a system of blood money (*diyah*) was followed. This system, however, occasionally failed to satisfy the kin of the victim, and blood feuds developed.

State Building and the Suppression of Indigenous Practices

After independence in 1971, the police force was renamed Bahrain Public Security under the Ministry of the Interior. Some vestiges of precolonial order maintenance remained within the more recently formed state-controlled police force. For example, individual police officers sometimes used traditional mediation practices to solve crime-related disputes, and police report that the payment of *diyah* (blood money) occasionally occurred after the colonial period, though this practice is technically illegal (Strobl 2007). Although tribal leaders no longer routinely inserted themselves directly into matters of criminal justice, they remained important as political leaders in their communities as part of a state of postcolonial hybridity in which they embraced state-based modernization while also holding on to traditional sociocultural markers (Seikaly 1994).

Modern policing in Bahrain is a creature of the colonial experience and, as a result, an institution beholden to the modern nation-state. The centralization of the “...chief concentrated means of violence” forms the basis of sociologist’s Charles Tilly’s (1985, p. 170) notion of the modern state. He theorizes that the nation-state emerges only after it has wrestled control over those internal groups who have previously held the authority for legitimate violence. Taming tribal or clan-based dispute resolution and violence is the necessary precursor to modern policing so that local communities become subordinate to the government rather than to their traditional patrons. Bahrain’s early twentieth century colonial police history reflects a similar consolidating effect even in a relatively small nation as it is. Colonial officials, such as Sir Charles Belgrave and the imperial British agents of the time, set up a modern policing and court system, which eventually delegitimized and replaced the kinship and tribal forms of justice. Rather than invite in the *qadis* and other community leaders to participate in justice and security, the locus of control shifted to the state, where it has remained, tempered only by more recent globalization forces such as the rise of multinational corporations and international laws and treaties around human rights standards.

Promise of Community Policing in Bahrain

In 2003, Bahraini police officials began to explore a community policing strategy, which hypothetically could represent a mild decentralization of the state’s monopoly on justice and security. The Bahraini police became interested in the community coproduction of safety and security reportedly after being exposed to other police forces’ experiences with community policing through global police professional conferences, associations, and networks. That year, the Bahraini government hosted an International Police Executive Forum conference entitled “Community and the Police” as a means of bringing in experts from around the world (Strobl 2011). According to one newspaper account, police participants from Australia and Japan particularly impressed the Bahraini police officials with

their ideas about how a more public relations-oriented approach to policing could help them overcome perceived problems of legitimacy and ensure human rights, transparency, and accountability (Fakhri 2005), particularly since they are a primarily Sunni police force serving a majority *Shi'a* population. In other media coverage, police cited Singapore and the United Kingdom as having the ideal community policing strategies, while a conference participant interviewed told this researcher that the Bahraini police primarily looked to Finland, Japan, and the United States for community policing advice and consultation. Regardless of who most inspired the Bahrainis, after the conference, the Ministry of the Interior subsequently sent officers to the United Kingdom to train in community policing techniques and philosophies. Afterward, those officers went on to offer a course on the subject to their colleagues and new recruits at the Royal Police Academy in Jaw, Bahrain (Strobl 2011).

In 2005, the first community police officers were sworn in as a special unit of 190 officers, 20 of whom were policewomen, and began foot patrols in local marketplaces (*suqs*). Their duties were said to also include taking on intractable conflicts that lead to repeated police cases, educating the community about crime and safety, and helping local police stations be more service oriented. According to a police colonel, one of the goals of the community policing unit is to increase the number of *Shi'a* in the Sunni-dominated forces (Strobl 2011), of which at least half of the 20 community policewomen were so identified (Strobl 2007). Unlike the other units of the police who wear military-style khaki uniforms, community police officers are issued new blue uniforms, reportedly to distinguish themselves as agents of change. The Minister of the Interior, Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, explained to the press that community policing is intended to help policing enter “a modernization phase to ensure better services” (Hamada 2005, p. 3). Further, a police major indicated that wearing blue softens the police image and assists them in reaching out to community members to help them with any problems they have or perceive (Strobl 2011).

Strange Coupling of Community Policing and Paramilitarism

Since their advent, the community policing unit has grown even as the use of riot control police and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Peninsula Shield forces to quell citizen demonstrations has also been on the rise. Since the beginning of the so-called Bahrain Spring in 2011, the opposition movement, dominated by the majority *Shi'a* underclass, has called on the Bahrain government to further democratize the country, better include *Shi'a* in political and economic decision making, and ensure human rights for all citizens, including in the criminal justice context.

Despite a very contested political climate, on January 12, 2012, the Ministry of the Interior announced its intention of hiring an additional 500 community police officers. According to the head of Bahrain Public Security, “[They] will be our conduit with the community as well... There must be soft policing as well as hard policing” (Toumi 2012). Reportedly, community police officers will be deployed to the municipalities in which they live and assist in implementing the police reforms called for in the Bahrain Independent Commission for Inquiry (BICI) report (Toumi 2012). The commission, empanelled in 2011 and chaired by Egyptian war crimes expert Mahmoud Cherif Bassiouni, investigated the government’s crackdown on the opposition movement, including the declaration of