IDENTITY, INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE: WHAT INFORMATION IS MOST HELPFUL IN UNDERSTANDING ANXIETIES AROUND TERRORISM?

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To what extent does knowledge about religious and/or ethnic diversity influence perceptions about intergroup relations? Does such knowledge of the "other" diminish anxieties about perceived cultural influences on democratic life and social harmony? Does limited knowledge about diverse cultures contribute to heighten concerns about security? We demonstrate that greater concerns around intergroup relations correlate with levels of anxiety. We also point to significant differences in how selected religious groups assess the causes of threats to national security. We suggest that there is value in expanding conversation across communities as a means to address anxieties.

There is a great degree of complexity involved in investigating how perceptions on security and terrorism are shaped by immigrant and minority religious identification. The very suggestion of such identity-based relationships risks encouraging generalizations about certain groups as it may assume that such identification conditions attitude and behaviour. Theories about the role of cultural identity may lead to unfounded accusations that certain groups deliberately seek to undercut social harmony.

Sometimes referred to as cultural intelligence (CQ) or cross-cultural competency, enhancing one's knowledge of communities has been the object of growing interest amongst law enforcement agencies and those in the business of gathering intelligence. The knowledge dimension of cultural intelligence focuses upon how a person can discern the similarities and differences between cultures. Persons with high CQ are believed to understand how to engage with new cultures and diverse situations, and can better assess what goes on within them and interact effectively with them.

The kind of cultural knowledge that is most helpful to those in law enforcement or charged with intelligence gathering is not always apparent. Religious and ethnic communities are not monolithic. What type of intelligence -cultural or otherwise- is most useful in comprehending community responses to security concerns and specifically the threat of terrorism? Rather than improving knowledge about the cultural attributes of specific communities, an analysis of group perceptions may offer a more fruitful avenue for building intelligence that expands the capacity to address people's concerns.

That which follows examines the perceptions of immigrant and non-immigrant Canadians and the perceptions amongst those identifying on the basis of religion around knowledge of religion, interfaith relations, acculturation, security concerns

and the threat of terrorism. The findings were collected from two surveys. The first was conducted amongst 2002 Canadians which included an oversample of 500 respondents born outside of Canada and the identification and oversample of religious groups with 388 persons identifying as Muslim, 334 as Jewish, 332 as No Religion, 282 as Protestant and 565 as Catholic. It was done by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies between March 20 and March 22nd, 2013. A second Leger survey was conducted between February 1st and 2nd, 2014 with 2063 Canadians with an oversample of 500 persons including 255 Muslims and 251 Jews. Both surveys were done via web panel, their probabilistic margins of error were 2.9% 19 times out of 20.

TABLE 1: KNOWLEDGE AMONGST CANADIANS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF SELECTED RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES - MARCH 2013

Knowledge of the History of ….	Christianity	Islam	Judaism
Very Knowledgeable	15.3%	2.7%	5.9%
Somewhat Knowledgeable	51.1%	20.1%	28.5%
Not Knowledgeable	32.0%	75.1%	63.2%
I prefer not to answer	1.5%	2.1%	2.4%

Nearly half of Canadians report either often or occasionally having contact with Jews or Muslims. Yet contact with these groups does not necessarily enhance knowledge about them. Knowledge of the history of minority faith communities in Canada is relatively low especially in the case of Islam. As observed below some two in three Canadians believe they are very or somewhat knowledgeable about Christianity, about one in three about Judaism and just over one in five about Islam (only 2.7% say they are very knowledgeable and 6% are very knowledgeable about Judaism).

TABLE 2: I HAVE GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGIONS OTHER THAN MY OWN - FEBRUARY 2014

	Total	French	English	Other	Muslim	Jewish
Total agree	55%	45%	56%	66%	79%	78%
Strongly agree	11%	7%	11%	17%	28%	25%
Somewhat agree	44%	38%	45%	48%	51%	53%
Total disagree	38%	48%	37%	26%	14%	19%
Somewhat disagree	26%	35%	24%	15%	11%	15%
Strongly disagree	13%	14%	13%	10%	3%	4%
I don't know	6%	5%	6%	6%	5%	1%
I prefer not to answer	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%

The February 2014 survey reveals that Muslim and Jewish Canadians are far more likely to report knowledge of religions other than their own and hence by extension they might be regarded as having a higher cultural intelligence than other Canadians.

When asked about whether they want to learn more about religions other than their own, the highest interest in doing so is expressed by Jews (72%) and Muslims (67%). Protestants (45%) and Catholics (48%) express less interest in learning about other religions, and those identifying as having no religion are the least interested (36%). A somewhat related finding in the survey reveals that those who harbour negative views of religious minorities are much less likely to show interest in learning more about religions other than their own.

Most Canadians believe that religion is divisive with the exception of Canadian Muslims where a significant majority of respondents agree that religion brings people together more than it divides them. Negative perceptions about religion are difficult to alter. Yet a deeper look into the data reveals that the perception of whether or not religion is divisive has no meaningful impact on the level of concern about terrorist activity in Canada or elsewhere.

TABLE 3: AGREEMENT BY SELECTED RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN CANADA (AND THOSE REPORTING NO RELIGION) WITH THE VIEW THAT "RELIGION BRINGS MORE PEOPLE TOGETHER THAN IT DIVIDES THEM" - MARCH 2013

Net Agree	Catholic	Protestant	No religion	Muslim	Jewish
Religion brings people together more than it divides them	37%	37%	17%	70%	36%

More Muslims disagree (46%) than agree (42%) that there is an irreconcilable conflict between Western societies and Muslim societies. But most non-Muslim Canadians feel differently. Approximately 60% of Christians and Jews surveyed believe that the presumed conflict is irreconcilable. On some level the feeling held by Canadians that there is a global conflict that is irreconcilable is reflected in the mere 37% of Canadians that take a positive view of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. As observed below, the Canadian-born population takes an even dimmer view of the relationship. But if there is a sense that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is less than positive, it is strongly felt that the relationship between Muslims and Jews is even worse. Just over one in five Canadians take a positive view of that relationship. Although Christians and Jews in Canada are the most negative about the relationship, some 47% of Muslims hold a positive view of the Muslim-Jewish relations.

TABLE 4: TOTAL POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF THOSE BORN IN CANADA AND BORN OUTSIDE OF CANADA OF RELATIONS BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND JEWS AND MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS - MARCH 2013

Very and Somewhat Positive	Total	Born in Canada	Born Outside of Canada
The Relations Between Muslims and Jews	22%	23%	19%
The relations Between Muslims and non-Muslims	37%	34%	46%

CONCERNS OVER TERRORISM

As observed below, Canadians are more anxious about terrorist activity happening at the international level than they are about terrorism in Canada. In effect, it can be assumed that most Canadians believe terrorist activity is more of an international problem than it is a Canadian one. Canadian Jews are by far the most concerned with terrorism on the international scale with 49% saying they are very worried.

TABLE 5: VERY AND SOMEWHAT WORRIED ABOUT TERRORISM IN CANADA AND THE WORLD FOR SELECTED RELIGIOUS GROUPS (AND THOSE REPORTING NO RELIGION) - MARCH 2013

	Worried about terrorist activity in Canada		Worried about terrorist activity in the World	
	Very worried	Somewhat worried	Very worried	Somewhat worried
Catholic	21.8%	38.9%	39.1%	45.0%
Protestant	19.7%	40.1%	35.3%	46.3%
Muslim	22.3%	32.6%	39.5%	37.9%
Jewish	23.0%	48.2%	49.3%	43.6%
No Religion	12.5%	35.7%	24.9%	49.0%

As further observed, the more likely Canadians feel that there is an irreconcilable conflict between Muslim and Western societies, the more they worry about terrorist activity. The data also reveal that those who hold more negative views about the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in Canada and between Jews and non-Jews are more likely to be concerned about terrorist activity in the country.

TABLE 6: AGREEMENT BY CANADIANS THAT THERE IS AN IRRECONCILABLE CONFLICT BETWEEN MUSLIM AND WESTERN SOCIETIES CORRELATED WITH THE LEVEL OF CONCERN WITH TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN CANADA - MARCH 2013

Terrorist activity in Canada	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Very worried	33.7%	18.3%	15.9%	11.3%
Somewhat worried	35.6%	42.9%	34.9%	24.6%
Not too worried	26.2%	34.1%	37.8%	38.3%
Not worried at all	4.5%	4.8%	11.3%	25.8%

We reported above that nearly half of Canadians had some contact with either Muslims or Jews. Does such contact have any meaningful impact on concerns over terrorism? The data suggest that the impact is limited. In effect more detailed analysis of the data reveals that the degree of contact does not significantly reduce anxieties around terrorism.

A minority of Canadians concur that over the past decade terrorism has been on the decline in the world. At 35%, the Muslim Canadian respondents were most likely to agree that terrorism has declined in the world over the past decade. Canadian Jews are least likely to concur.

TABLE 7: PERCEPTIONS AMONGST SELECTED RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN CANADA (AND THOSE REPORTING NO RELIGION) AS TO WHETHER TERRORISM HAS DECLINED IN THE WORD OVER THE LAST DECADE - MARCH 2013

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know	I prefer not to answer
Catholic	2.0%	15.0%	35.0%	34.6%	11.9%	1.5%
Protestant	4.1%	12.8%	30.6%	43.8%	7.8%	0.9%
Muslim	11.6%	24.0%	25.6%	21.9%	13.6%	3.3%
Jewish	3.5%	8.8%	30.1%	49.1%	8.4%	-
No Religion	1.1%	16.4%	34.0%	25.2%	22.9%	0.3%

Immigrants (44%) are more likely than non-immigrants (38%) to agree that the Canadian government's efforts to combat terrorism are working well. Muslim Canadians are somewhat more inclined (35%) than other groups surveyed to think that international efforts to combat terrorism are working well. Some 30% of immigrants and non-immigrants do not believe that international efforts to combat terrorism are working well.

TABLE 8: CANADIAN GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO COMBAT TERRORISM ARE WORKING WELL - MARCH 2013

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know	I prefer not to answer
Born in Canada	5.3%	32.7%	25.6%	12.7%	22.8%	0.9%
Born Outside Canada	7.9%	35.8%	21.5%	13.6%	19.0%	2.1%

As observed below, there is a substantial difference between Muslims and non-Muslims when asked to identify the most important factors that contribute to terrorist acts. Survey respondents were invited to give two possible answers to the question (hence the total percentages exceed 100%). Canadian Jews and Christians were far more likely than Muslim Canadian respondents to identify religious fundamentalism as the principal contributing factor explaining terrorism; they selected it to a higher degree than they did poverty/economic inequality or Western Foreign Policy. For Muslim Canadians, the least important of the three factors contributing to terrorism is religious fundamentalism.

TABLE 9: PLEASE IDENTIFY THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO TERRORIST ACTIONS. / TWO MENTIONS POSSIBLE-SELECTED RELIGIOUS GROUPS (AND THOSE REPORTING NO RELIGION - MARCH 2013

	Poverty and Economic Inequality	Religious Fundamentalism	Western Foreign Policy
Catholic	44	76	45
Protestant	43	79	43
Muslim	55	37	56
Jewish	44	89	28
No Religion	50	68	41

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS AND THE STATE

During debates in Québec about the introduction of the Charter of Québec Values it was contended by advocates of the Charter that a ban on wearing visible religious symbols in public institutions might reduce fundamentalism. As revealed in the table below, the suggestion yielded a much higher level of agreement amongst francophones than it did amongst non-francophones. It resonated much less with the country's Muslim and Jewish populations.

TABLE 10: BANNING THE WEARING OF VISIBLE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS WILL HELP REDUCE RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM - FEBRUARY 2014

	Total	French	English	Other	Muslim	Jewish
Total agree	32%	48%	27%	32%	17%	14%
Strongly agree	12%	21%	9%	9%	6%	4%
Somewhat agree	21%	27%	18%	23%	11%	10%
Total disagree	55%	41%	60%	55%	73%	80%
Somewhat disagree	24%	23%	24%	26%	18%	23%
Strongly disagree	31%	18%	36%	29%	55%	57%
I don't know	12%	10%	12%	12%	6%	5%
I prefer not to answer	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%	1%

A majority of francophones agree that religious minorities should abandon their customs and traditions. That view is held by one in four non-francophones and less than one in six Muslim and Jewish Canadian respondents.

TABLE 11: RELIGIOUS/CULTURAL GROUPS SUCH AS JEWS, MUSLIMS AND SIKHS SHOULD ABANDON THEIR CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS AND BECOME MORE LIKE THE MAJORITY - FEBRUARY 2014

	Total	French	English	Other	Muslim	Jewish
Total agree	31%	53%	25%	22%	15%	12%
Strongly agree	11%	24%	8%	8%	7%	4%
Somewhat agree	20%	29%	18%	14%	8%	8%
Total disagree	61%	41%	67%	69%	77%	86%
Somewhat disagree	30%	26%	32%	32%	16%	17%
Strongly disagree	31%	15%	35%	37%	61%	69%
I don't know	6%	5%	7%	7%	3%	1%
I prefer not to answer	1%	1%	1%	1%	5%	2%

A majority of Canadians agree that freedom of religion should include the wearing of visible religious symbols in public institutions. That view is held by 60% of non-francophone Canadians and over 80% of Canadian Muslims and Jews. For their part, approximately one third of francophones are in agreement with some six in ten disagreeing that wearing religious symbols in public institutions is a religious freedom.

TABLE 12: FREEDOM OF RELIGION SHOULD INCLUDE THE WEARING OF VISIBLE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS - FEBRUARY 2014

	Total	French	English	Other	Muslim	Jewish
Total agree	55%	34%	62%	60%	82%	81%
Strongly agree	25%	14%	28%	30%	54%	54%
Somewhat agree	30%	20%	33%	30%	27%	27%
Total disagree	36%	61%	29%	30%	12%	15%
Somewhat disagree	19%	25%	17%	20%	9%	11%
Strongly disagree	17%	36%	11%	10%	3%	5%
I don't know	7%	4%	9%	9%	3%	2%
I prefer not to answer	1%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%

CONCLUSION

As noted at the outset, cultural intelligence (CQ) has been the object of increasing interest in the intelligence gathering community. But when dealing with security and counter terrorism, knowledge of the cultural characteristics of specific groups may be of less value than awareness of the perceptions individuals might hold around relations between communities, their levels of anxiety and to what such anxieties are attributable when looking at issues of security and the threat of terrorism. Indeed the assumption that cultural attributes are relevant to understanding security and terrorism might result in harmful generalizations about groups that often hold diverse points of view on such matters. Public opinion data provides useful insights into differences across groups and within them on those matters which are especially relevant to understand what lies behind anxieties. It has been established quite clearly above that negative views on relations between communities are a factor that influences the level of concern around terrorist activity in Canada. It speaks to the importance of working to modify perceptions about such relationships as a means to reduce anxieties. And it is not just about the perceptions of the relationships as there are also real differences across groups about the factors that underlie terrorism. These matters need to be the objective of greater cross-cultural conversation though not necessarily between religious leaders. The interfaith approach to such discussions may not be the optimal one given that most Canadians do not regard religion as a force for social harmony.

NOTE

[1] David Livermore "CQ: The test of your potential for cross –cultural success" June 1, 2010 in Forbes: www.forbes.com/2010/01/06/cq-cultural-intelligence-leadership-managing-globalization.html