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The Rise of the American-Muslim Totalitarian State

By Garikai Chengu
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Muslim-Americans are living in a totalitarian police state with worsening harassment, profiling, and surveillance. The United States' government may claim liberty and justice for all; however, in practice, towards Muslims, it exhibits all four major characteristics of a totalitarian state: a war on terror that targets Muslims abroad, a totalitarian police state at home, public executions by drones and gulags outside the rule of law, and a strong reliance on propaganda and political demagoguery.

The hallmark of fascism was state oppression of certain targeted non-privileged groups. Today, Muslims are bearing the brunt of America's totalitarian police state.

Despite FBI records showing that since 9/11, Muslims have committed far less domestic terror attacks than white supremacists, it is the American-Muslim community that is under unprecedented levels of surveillance and government intrusion. Muslims in America are unquestionably experiencing a fascist system of surveillance, operating at the same level that East Germans faced under the Stasi spy agency. Researcher, Arun Kundnani, has shown how the FBI has one counterterrorism spy for every 94 Muslims in the U.S., which approaches Stasi's ratio of one spy for every 66 citizens.

Clearly racism, as much as oil, fuels the War on Terror. White Christians rarely have to worry that an undercover agent or informant has infiltrated their churches, student organizations or neighborhoods. The simple fact that U.S. law enforcement has not infiltrated and spied on conservative Christian communities to disrupt violent rightwing extremism, which is the biggest terrorism threat in America, confirms what Muslims in America know in their bones: to worship Allah is to be suspect.

Federal judges recently ruled that suspicion-less surveillance of Muslims is permissible under the U.S. Constitution. The NYPD has admitted that Mosques, student groups, restaurants, even grade schools, have all been under surveillance. By rapidly increasing both government policies of secrecy and surveillance, Mr. Obama's government is increasing its power to watch its citizens, while diminishing its citizens' power to watch their government.

The threat of homegrown Islamic terrorism has been largely manufactured, so that the so-called War on Terror can promote multi-billion dollar, corporate-sponsored militarism abroad and the erosion of two hundred-year-old civil liberties at home.

Muslim-Americans are not only facing increasing oppression from the state, but they are also facing growing prejudice from their fellow countrymen, as hate crimes and civil liberty violations against Muslims continue to precipitously rise.

A recent Pew Forum Poll established that Muslims are by far the most disliked minority in America. According to FBI statistics, anti-Muslim hate crimes soared by an astounding 50 percent last year. Muslims constitute 1 percent of the U.S. population, but they are 13 percent of the victims of religious-based hate crimes. Islamophobia and xenophobia now seem as American as apple pie. Intolerance of Muslims is often inverted, depicting Muslim customs as an insult to Western customs.

One major aspect of American totalitarianism, shared by fascist regimes, is the nation's enormous military budget. In 1933, Nazi Germany's military spending was 2 percent of their national income; by 1940, it was 44 percent.

Today, America spends more on her military than the rest of the world combined. America has expanded its military into having 662 foreign military bases, according to the Department of Defense's 2010 Base Structure Report. The War on Terror has cost \$6 trillion, the equivalent of

\$75,000 for every American household, calculates Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Another hallmark of totalitarianism is the creation of a prison system outside the rule of law that is largely designed to imprison and torture one minority group. The Guantanamo Bay gulag is unquestionably a crime against humanity. There is unlimited cruelty in a system that seems to be unable to free the innocent and unable to punish the guilty.

In April 24, 1934, a People's Court, just like Guantanamo was established, which also bypassed the judicial system: prisoners were held indefinitely in isolation and were tortured and subjected to show trials. The People's Court was signed into law by Adolf Hitler.

In 2007, a politician who was vehemently against the human rights abuses at Guantanamo Bay, explained what he would do about the torture camp if he ever became President:

"When I am President, I will close Guantanamo. It is a moral outrage, a blight upon America's conscience. It is the location of so many of the worst constitutional abuses in recent years. From inception, Guantanamo was a laboratory for unlawful military interrogation, detention, and trials."

The politician who uttered these words was Senator Barack Obama. Ironically, under President Obama's tenure, conditions for Guantanamo detainees, from both a physical and legal standpoint, have become markedly worse.

Public executions are perhaps one of the most overt and odious symbols of totalitarianism. In totalitarian Spain, under General Franco, mass public executions were the norm, and were often carried out in bullrings or with band music and onlookers dancing in the victims' blood. With Hitler and Mussolini supplying arms to Franco, some 200,000 men and women were publically executed during the war and bombed from overhead.

Nowadays, drones are the ultimate totalitarian technology. Washington both uses drones for what amount to public extra-judicial executions of Muslims abroad, and for spying on American Muslims at home.

Most Americans believe that drones are targeted and therefore humane. Nothing could be further from the truth. By all accounts, drones have killed more children than terrorists. According to a new report from *The Intercept*, nearly 90 percent of people killed in drone strikes in Afghanistan are civilians.

By 2018, some privacy experts believe law enforcement will likely control over 35,000 drones that the government will use to monitor Americans from the skies.

Integral to the rise of the America Muslim Totalitarian State is propaganda. Sheldon Wolin has poignantly pointed out that, whereas the production of propaganda was crudely centralized in Nazi Germany, in the United States, it is left to highly concentrated media corporations, thus maintaining the illusion of a "free press".

The American propaganda machine is highly sophisticated. It does not rely upon the radio addresses, speeches, and leaflets disseminated by the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, nor does it rely on the crude censorship or harassment of free press ordered by a Politburo. The propaganda of America's "one percent" is subtle yet pervasive; it relies not only on government diktats but also on the mass media, art, pop culture and Hollywood.

American cinema and music have always been a remarkably effective means of whipping up xenophobic wartime sentiment. For example, the highest grossing war film in history, *American Sniper*, and President Obama's favorite television show, *Homeland*, both engage in an overly broad generalization of Islam, and depict Muslims and terrorists in a way that is indicative of widespread Islamophobia in American culture.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee reported a spike in Islamophobia and hate crimes after the release of *American Sniper*, which culminated in the recent slaying of three young Muslims in North Carolina, who were shot in the head sniper execution style. American Islamophobia operates in the service of American militarism and American militarism abroad, and in turn, ratchets up Islamophobia against minorities at home.

The media determines our language, our language shapes our thoughts, and our thoughts determine our actions. Language is the fulcrum of a society's perception. Whosoever controls the public's language, controls the public's perception.

The corporate elites who sit on media editorial boards control said language. In 1983, fifty companies owned ninety percent of U.S. media. Today, only six media giants control a staggering ninety percent of what the American public listens to, reads, and watches. "Think of the press as a great keyboard on which the government can play," once remarked Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Germany's Minister of Propaganda.

For Muslim-Americans the media's Orwellian totalitarian language is clear: Drones are Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. Torture is Enhanced Interrogation. Occupation is Liberation.

Donald Trump's recent call to ban Muslims from entry into the U.S. is not without precedent. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 effectively banned all Chinese immigration to the US. This racist law remained in place for five decades and required all Chinese to carry identification certificates or face deportation. When Trump endorsed identification cards to be worn at all times by American Muslims, his popularity jumped almost 3 percentage points. If Donald Trump's policies are viewed by Americans as odious and un-American, then why has he consistently gained popularity after every anti-Muslim outburst?

America's history is stock full of totalitarianism and popularized, irrational fear of "the other". It began when the settler pioneers feared Native Americans and united against them by slaughtering millions in order to quell that fear. As settlers began to unite around a common identity they feared the British Monarchy and rebelled against it. Americans then fought against Mexico, France and various other countries for vast land control. Five hundred documented revolts on slave ships and the fact that plantation owners were greatly outnumbered by slaves, cemented the role of fear that perpetuated slavery for centuries. With greater fear comes greater

violence, and with greater violence comes a greater need to justify that violence by ratcheting up the fear.

After the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps on American soil. Vietnamese Americans were then targets of xenophobia in America during the Vietnam War, and then there was the “Red Scare”, which targeted Russian-Americans throughout the Cold War.

From the ashes of the Soviet Union arose the terrorists from the oil-rich Middle East, who became America’s new number one enemy and so the legacy of American xenophobia continues. Today, as the deliberately unending war on terror rumbles on abroad, Muslim, Arab, and Sikh Americans fear that they are living in a totalitarian state.