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Challenges for effective counter-terrorism communication:

Practitioner insights and policy implications for preventing radicalisation,

disrupting attack planning and mitigating terrorist attacks

Growing concerns about small-scale, low sophistication terrorist attacks, and the difficulties they present for security services in terms of especially early detection and keeping soft targets safe make public coproduction of security increasingly necessary. Communication aimed at a range of audiences to ensure that the public(s) is aware of the role they can play will be central to this. This article explores challenges associated with communication designed to prevent radicalisation, interdict attack planning and mitigate the impacts of a terrorist attack in the UK and Denmark. The authors analyse the interplay between these challenges and the contemporary terrorist context. The paper highlights that new, or adapted, communications and approaches may be necessary.

Introduction

While remaining vigilant to 9/11 and 7/7 style attacks, security services across Europe are increasingly contending with smaller scale, less sophisticated acts of terrorism. Attacks by lone actors or small, self-organised cells in Belgium, the UK, Denmark, Germany and France testify to the growing relevance of this threat. Indeed, officials in countries including the UK and Germany have described future attacks of this nature as almost inevitable.[1] The unique features and challenges of the changing threat landscape,[2] and the active promotion of this attack style by terrorist groups such as Daesh and Al-Qaeda,[3] present significant policy challenges. In particular, they make

public coproduction of security increasingly necessary, by which we mean the active engagement of private citizens and key non-security stakeholders (e.g. teachers) in aiding authorities in detecting, assessing and reporting risks of violent extremism. Communication, already recognised as a central element of counter-terrorism strategies, is particularly important in this context, if the public(s) are to recognise the role they can play and be prepared (and able) to do so.[4]

Coproduction has informed a range of policy areas, from Neighbourhood Watch to public service design, across different national and cultural contexts.[5] Safety and security are not public goods that can be produced by the state alone and simply consumed by citizens.[6] Coproduction is therefore increasingly recognised as a vital component in public safely broadly and crime control and prevention specifically.[7] Whilst it is traditionally associated with expanding the role citizens play in designing and delivering public services,[8] some scholars have explored the role that a wider collection of actors (e.g. private businesses) can play in coproduction – in effect creating a 'responsibilized community' to counter crime.[9]

Whilst in some contexts coproduction may arise from citizens filling in for government shortcomings,[10] the need for public cooperation to tackle the contemporary terrorist risk stems from the nature of smaller, low tech attacks. The higher prevalence of social marginalisation, mental ill-health and online influence amongst those acting alone can make it harder for authorities to intervene during the radicalisation stage.[11] Interdiction can also be especially challenging when attackers are operating alone or in small groups because traditional methods such as communication interception may be less effective.[12] Finally, the trend towards this kind of attack and the focus on soft targets

means the public need to be able to respond appropriately during an attack and return to normality as quickly as possible afterwards.[13]

Consequently, UK security officials have been explicit about the need for public support, with senior Metropolitan Police officials identifying that the contemporary terrorist threat requires 'even more public assistance'[14] and suggesting that:

> It's quite hard to monitor organised terrorist groups. It's very, very difficult – virtually impossible – to ascertain where a lone-actor would strike or what's going to provoke a lone-actor into carrying out an attack. So it's absolutely crucial that the public are out there helping us because we couldn't work without them.[15]

The need for effective communication is enhanced by the fact that studies suggest the public feels less willing or able to contribute to safety and crime prevention compared to other policy areas, such as environmental improvement.[16] This is problematic in addressing terrorism because, as Williams et al. note, successful coproduction is 'dependent upon the willingness of all parties to coordinate, cooperate and collaborate'.[17]

Despite the potential benefits of coproduction, there are a number of challenges associated with this approach, including issues related to trust and role ambiguity.[18] Similarly, there can be negative or unintended consequences specifically related to coproduction of security and safety, such as increasing fear of crime.[19] Furthermore, politicians and professionals can see this approach as risky, as the behaviour of

coproducing users is more unpredictable than that of passive users.[20] Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that expanding certain types of private action can easily pass a cost-benefits test.[21]

This article draws on data from 30 interviews with practitioners responsible for designing, commissioning or delivering counter-terrorism measures in the UK and Denmark. The authors use cross-national comparisons to explore the challenges associated with communication designed to secure the active support of a range of audiences to prevent radicalisation, interdict attack planning and mitigate the impacts of terrorism. By drawing on an expansive body of original primary data from countries with distinct experiences of terrorism and approaches to counter-terrorism communication, this paper highlights how some existing challenges will be particularly important in the context of contemporary terrorism and that new, or adapted, communications may be necessary. Cross-national differences are highlighted where relevant, but our data suggest more commonalities than difference in challenges faced in the UK and Denmark.

The article aims to contribute to counter-terrorism literature and contemporary European policy debates in two key ways. Most importantly, the analysis of new data from two countries across all three phases of the counter-terrorism process (prevention, interdiction and mitigation) adds nuance and empirical evidence to support current understandings of the challenges of counter-terrorism communication. This is crucial considering recent research which indicates that the contemporary terrorist context has increased the importance of crisis communication knowledge.[22] Secondly, by looking at issues affecting communications designed to increase the

coproduction of security across a broader range of actors than those traditionally focused on, the article adds to emerging coproduction literature on security and crime management. Overall, this research has the goal of informing and enabling a significant shift in existing public policy and practice towards terrorism.

Methodology

The UK and Denmark were selected for comparison as both have relatively advanced counter-terrorism programmes, particularly in terms of radicalisation prevention.[23] However, while some aspects are comparable cross-nationally, to date the UK has placed more emphasis on counter-terrorism communication directly targeting the general public. Furthermore, these countries have different experiences of terrorism. The UK has a history of both lone-actor and group-based terrorist attacks (Irish nationalism, the 7th July London bombings, the 2013 murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich, attacks on London Bridge, Manchester and Finsbury Park in 2017). Denmark has few historic encounters with terrorism, but has been on high-alert since the 2005 Danish cartoon crisis and has subsequently experienced several unsuccessful group-based plots and three lone-actor attacks (two attempted, one successful). The similarities and differences in policies and experiences make these excellent cases for analysing how communication measures and their impact might depend on national counter-terrorism discourses and experiences.

A review of 197 official counter-terrorism documents designed to prevent, interdict or mitigate terrorism (149 documents in the UK and 48 in Denmark) were reviewed and used to inform interview schedules. Semi-structured interviews (N=30) were conducted between May and October 2015 with UK and Danish practitioners

responsible for designing, commissioning or delivering counter-terrorism measures. The interviews explored issues including modes of communication delivery, expectations of impact, timing of communications and the media context. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. Findings were derived from thematic analysis utilising NVivo software.

To ensure that interviews captured broad themes and context specific challenges, interviewees were drawn from a range of sectors, geographical locations and level of seniority. 22 UK practitioners were interviewed (9 from security services, 3 from central government, 4 from local authorities, 4 from community/faith organisations and 2 business representatives) and 8 Danish practitioners (4 from security services and 4 from local prevention programme providers and community outreach programmes). The range also reflected the ambition of understanding the impact of communication targeted at a range of audiences, based on an argument within coproduction studies that 'the wider the range of groups sought as co-producers, the greater the potential benefits available'.[24] The larger number of UK interviewees and documents reflects the fact that the UK has gone further in its communication design and dissemination than Denmark and that communications are delivered by a wider variety of agencies. The interviews were approved by King's College London's Research Ethics Committee.

UK and Danish Counter-terrorism Communication Practices and Discourses

Both the UK and Denmark have national strategies to address terrorism. In the UK there is one over-arching strategy known at CONTEST, which brings together the efforts of a range of agencies to deliver four strands of activity: Prevent, Pursue,

Protect and Prepare.[25] In Denmark the different facets of preparing and responding are distinct, with separate strategies in place.[26] Despite some differences in approach, both recognise the importance of counter-terrorism communication. However, the grey literature review and information provided by interviewees made clear that the UK deploys a larger number of communication products, has a larger scale of delivery, and a stronger willingness for officials to speak publicly about the threat of terrorism, and the role that members of the public can play in mitigating this threat.[27] For instance, the UK Security Minister outlined in March 2017 that:

> The horror of recent terrorist attacks in Europe and beyond is a shocking reminder of the threat we all face […] Our police and security and intelligence agencies work tirelessly, often unseen, day in and day out to keep families and communities across the country safe. The public also have a vital role to play as they are ideally placed to notice activity which is unusual.[28]

Both countries have developed online, printed and face-to-face communications to address radicalisation, designed for a range of audiences, such as frontline staff (e.g. social workers). However, each only has limited communication products for the more general population. UK authorities appear to place more emphasis on communicating with faith organisations and communities that may be best placed to recognise signs of radicalisation. For instance, the UK's *Prevent Tragedies* campaign targets mothers of young people at risk of traveling to Syria to join Daesh.[29] No large-scale counter-terrorism interdiction or mitigation campaigns are employed in Denmark, but local level campaigns targeting specific vulnerable communities do exist.[30] This is in contrast to

the UK where authorities have long used interdiction campaigns such as *It's Probably Nothing, But…* to encourage the general public to report suspicious signs of attack planning.[31] More recently, the UK government has rolled out pre-event mitigation campaigns to prepare the public for actions to take in the case of a terrorist attack. The most important example is the *Run, Hide, Tell* campaign, which was originally delivered only to security professionals, but following coordinated attacks in Paris in November 2015, has been released to the general public in leaflet and video form, promoted in the media and tweeted by police services during the terrorist attack on London Bridge.[32]

The UK also recently launched the *Action Counters Terrorism (ACT)* campaign to provide an overarching identity for communications across all three phases of terrorism. With the public already contributing intelligence to around 1/3 of terrorism investigations, the ACT campaign recognises that members of the public can play a critical part in helping to tackle the terrorist threat. Similarly, a recent British Transport Campaign, 'See It, Say It, Sorted' was designed to encourage train passengers and individuals visiting train stations to report unusual items or behaviour. The ACT and See It, Say It, Sorted campaigns explicitly focus on coproduction, as evidenced by the ACT website stating 'with the terror threat becoming increasingly complex and varied, police are calling on communities to act on their instincts to help prevent atrocities taking place in the UK and overseas'.[33] Denmark does not employ this approach to unifying the branding of counter-terrorism messages although the importance of coproduction in the area of counter-terrorism is recognized in statements by security service officials and in policy documents.[34]

Despite a number of communication measures having been developed in both countries, some threat types have no unique communications designed to address them specifically, such as lone actor terrorism.[35] Furthermore, detailed evaluations of the impact of the communications are sparse in both countries, although a small number are now emerging in the UK.[36]

Communication Challenges in the UK and Denmark

Analysis of interview data and grey literature enabled the authors to identify six key challenges that are particularly pertinent for counter-terrorism communication. Whilst other concerns were also raised, such as budgetary constraints and challenges around evaluation, these issues are common to a variety of communication areas. This paper, however, focuses specifically on those challenges identified as particularly important to counter-terrorism communications designed to secure public (and other actors') support for security coproduction. These reflect the experiences of practitioners over recent years and subsequently address a range of terrorist risks, but many of the issues raised are likely to be particularly acute for the contemporary threat of small-scale attacks. Some of the findings support challenges recognised in the wider literature, such as the perceived credibility of state messages which varies between countries and across different communities.[37] Others have received less focus and provide original insight, such as activist produced counter-communications designed to undermine state communications intended to secure support for radicalisation prevention programmes.

Counter-terrorism communications are dependent on the audience prioritised, the nature of threat (e.g. extreme far-right, Islamist or secessionist), and the wider

government approach. As such, this article focuses on broad thematic issues, such as the subject of language sensitivity rather than specific terms relevant for particular communities. Following consideration of these challenges, implications of our findings for the theory and policy of counter-terrorism communication and coproduction of security will be discussed.

Challenge One: Engaging non-security focused partners

Both Danish and UK respondents emphasised the importance of securing the cooperation of partners across the public, private and third sector but highlighted that this was often a challenge. Key difficulties were believed to stem from concerns of potential partners, in particular public-sector front-line staff, sections of the business community and some community and faith groups. Securing the support of partners with limited security experience was considered especially challenging for radicalisation prevention programmes. However, our interviews with community groups and intervention providers also highlighted the challenges that these potential partners themselves face by supporting counter-terrorism programmes and communication.

Practitioners working on radicalisation prevention in both countries have prioritised communication towards public sector front-line staff, based on the assumption that these services engage with potentially vulnerable individuals regularly. As one UK security official described, 'if you left it just to Prevent practitioners there's not enough of us to do it, quite frankly'.[38] Similarly, a UK local authority officer identified 'priority attendees' for training sessions as 'people like social workers, teachers, people who are interfacing with already vulnerable individuals'.[39] Communications targeted at

these audiences seek to explain radicalisation prevention programmes and encourage specific actions, such as reporting signs of vulnerability. However, respondents described instances in which communication attempts resulted in push-back due to staff concerns over the potential targeting of certain communities, or general concerns over the securitisation of their work. For example, one UK local authority Prevent officer described how 'people will automatically assume because it sits within CONTEST, it's a securitised agenda'.[40] A UK police officer identified a 'preconceived idea that it was intelligence gathering with a view to executive action'.[41]

While this challenge seems less acute in Denmark, Danish practitioners nevertheless reported that the authorities underestimated the communication task involved in convincing frontline personnel that radicalisation prevention is similar to other safeguarding issues.[42] Thus, messages at awareness workshops were initially received with scepticism, especially by teachers who did not see it as 'their job to spot potential terrorists'.[43] However, push-back is more organised in the UK, where the Prevent Strategy has been publically criticised by The National Students Union,[44] medical professionals[45] and delegates from the National Union of Teachers.[46]

Securing community and faith group support has been similarly challenging for government and security practitioners. Whilst not a priority for Denmark, in the UK there have been efforts to work with individuals and groups perceived to have credibility in the eyes of the audiences believed to be vulnerable to radicalisation (e.g. for delivering counter-narrative communications or publicly supporting radicalisation prevention programmes). Some interviewees highlighted difficulties in securing this support, attributing this to scepticism amongst some community and faith

organisations about counter-terrorism strategies.[47] The fear of being seen to work too closely with the state and losing credibility with local communities was also raised in these interviews. As one UK police officer outlined, 'if you're seen to be working hand in glove with the state, there are risks attached to that'.[48] Other UK interviewees focused on practical issues which make community group delivery of counter-radicalisation communication difficult, suggesting that, 'when you look at Imams and the Muslim community with regards to the community networks, their IT footprint on the internet is absolutely minimal'.[49] Consequently, some local authority Prevent officers argued that there are a lack of 'credible community voices' to deliver counter-narrative work.

In the interdiction and mitigation spaces practitioners highlighted a lack of support from some businesses. Once again, this concern was more acute in the UK (in large part because the UK has far more communications targeted at this audience). Despite an increased recognition by many businesses about the threat of terrorism, some are reportedly reluctant to share government counter-terrorism communications with staff and customers.[50] Interviewees indicated that this stems from at least three sources. The first is concern that counter-terrorism messages undermine the organisation's brand. A business consultant advising clients on security recalled that:

> One type of organisation, and it is a kind of high-end luxury goods organisation, and they're very brand conscious [...] they will not put signs up around the walls, so for them it's the challenge, they want the effect, but they won't put signs up on the walls.[51]

Reflecting on her experiences working with other high-end clients, she suggested that:

> In terms of slotting in any kind of message from the government, it just doesn't happen, so you wouldn't see even in a lift for a company where it's got scrolling news, unless they felt it was specific to their organisation […] It's just considered to be too war-like for them.[52]

The second factor was concern that promoting counter-terrorism messages creates the appearance that the organisation is a target, which could subsequently deter customers. A security manager at a high profile sporting venue emphasised that the club is reliant on its fan base and, consequently, public perceptions of the organisation are important. While being clear that requests from police would be adhered to the club is nevertheless conscious of avoiding messaging that makes fans think, 'Oh, I'm not going to [*name of sports club removed*], they're worried to death about a bomb going off there'.[53] This concern is more commonly reported businesses in the UK in comparison to concerns raised by Danish interviewees.

The final barrier was that some businesses either do not see a terrorist attack as a realistic threat or feel that they could not have an impact if an attack occurred, an issue raised by practitioners in both countries.[54] For instance, a manual for trainers in Denmark suggests that for store managers:

> Terrorism is so far not an element in their risk assessment, especially because they experience that they cannot make a difference in case of a terrorist attack. In light of that it is easier to ignore the risk.[55]

This perception stems in part from the security services being limited in what information they can share. One UK police officer reported that businesses complain about a lack of evidence behind security recommendations. This is because he can only share what is approved and provided by the UK intelligence service's Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre[56]. Another interviewee suggested that changing business attitudes is difficult because obtaining focused and current threat information 'is almost impossible'.[57] Furthermore, a Danish security service interviewee underlined based on a target group assessment carried out with Danish store managers in crowded places that the risk from terrorism is generally perceived to be 'less important than being service-minded amongst overworked, young and politically disinterested shop keepers'.[58]

Challenge Two: Credibility and branding

A related challenge to the effective delivery of counter-terrorism communication is the credibility and branding of communications, particularly for radicalisation prevention. Some respondents highlighted a conflicted view concerning the scale of this challenge, especially in the UK. Some UK practitioners were confident that prevention messages were well received by communities. One suggested that, 'it's warmly welcome, yeah I do think, I think they take it on board, I think they like the fact that we're talking to them'[59] whilst one police officer suggested that 'there's very little resistance […] I've stood up in front of Mosque congregations and given talks, they're usually very appreciative'.[60]

However, many suggested that state messages about radicalisation are often not perceived as credible. One UK police officer argued that for many communities, including but not limited to Muslim communities, police counter-terrorist communications are treated with 'suspicion' and suggested that 'the police are the last person that are a credible source to some people and sections of the community'.[61] Another suggested that if 'you badge that counter-narrative with Home Office or a police badge, no one's ever going to look at it'.[62] A different police officer argued that 'products out there that had a government and or police footprint on them in any way, they'd have no credibility with the people that we're trying to get to'.[63] Similarly, a UK local authority Prevent lead suggested that 'when there's a government footprint on it [a communication campaign], it doesn't gain traction locally'[64] whilst another Prevent officer argued that, 'people just don't believe the government'.[65] In terms of counter-narratives, one central government official suggested that for many of the audiences that Prevent messages try to reach 'government isn't the most credible voice'.[66]

Danish interviewees also noted these challenges, commenting on low levels of trust in the government and police amongst target audiences, although there appeared fewer conflicting opinions about community perceptions of government communications. One Danish interviewee suggested that workshop instructors and community outreach coordinators are perceived as representatives of the system which some target groups distrust, thus making communicating about radicalisation difficult.[67] Another suggested that:

> At times wearing 'blue shirts' and stressing that you come from the police is
> a great advantage. With some target groups this gives credibility and power

to the message. It simply means more respect, which is conducive to getting the message across. In other situations our police background serves as a conversation blocker.[68]

Similarly, a Danish workshop instructor reported that students often feel more at ease if instructors explain that they represent the municipality and not the police.[69] Interviewees in both states suggested that this challenge can be overcome by clearly stating objectives and being approachable but underlined that building mutual trust takes time. One Danish counter-radicalization mentor argued that:

Dismantling the initial layers of distrust in me as a representative of the system sometimes takes months. Sometimes I never succeed. But it can be done by investing some of yourself and explaining clearly that you are here to help and not to judge them.[70]

Representatives of UK community and faith organisations supported these insights. Despite noting that they welcomed face-to-face engagement they suggested that formal communication modes were often received less positively. One community organisation suggested that the Government's 'political style communications' often fail to relate with the Muslim communities or vulnerable individuals – in part because they signal to a community that they are being singled out or because they lack understanding of the cultures within those communities.[71] Another organisation working with Muslim women reflected on a police communication campaign encouraging mothers to report fears that family members were becoming radicalised. She suggested that local mothers were 'up in arms' and that deep-lying mistrust of the police could not be overcome with this type of campaign as 'the police are the last

people they would go to'.[72] An intervention provider with expertise in far-right communities reinforced this point, arguing that:

> Politicians and even police, they're seen by these guys as the system. They don't listen to people like that, they don't, that's a fact, that's like asking an Islamist to listen to, I don't know… David Cameron, Tony Blair.[73]

While organised and influential opposition to radicalisation prevention programmes seem low scale or absent in Denmark, in the UK context credibility is further undermined by the influence of domestic organisations opposed to the Prevent Strategy. For instance, several interviewees mentioned the advocacy group CAGE, which is frequently critical of the Prevent Strategy. One local authority officer suggested that:

> CAGE will print a 30-page bad news story on Prevent and, actually, when you meet people – particularly in the Muslim community – and you talk Prevent, the first thing they'll say, they'll start quoting you from CAGE […] They're much more interesting to listen to; they're much more emotive than government speech, and emotive language is really important.[74]

Another, from a different borough, described similar experiences:

> I think they [CAGE] have a very effective communication and media strategy and they reach out to the masses really, and I think that's why they have so much buy-in from the Muslim community […] the local communities are just

literally copying and pasting bits and pieces off their website and that's their counter-narrative.[75]

One central government official referred to:

An anti-anti-extremism lobby, which is pretty well organised, apparently reasonably well funded and has been at it for a long time, and we do see what we would probably argue are quite extreme positions echoed in what should be mainstream BME media outlets, aimed at sections of the community, because they have become normalised through lack of challenge in the past.[76]

Challenge Three: Unintended consequences

The difficulty of avoiding unintended negative consequences was also raised – a prominent concern in both countries. Several practitioners involved in radicalisation communications noted the potential to cause fear or reinforce perceptions of stigmatisation.[77] As one UK central government official noted, 'a key challenge is always not do more harm than good'.[78] Summarising the risks of radicalisation communications if not carefully managed, a Danish local authority interviewee suggested that:

There is a lot of mistrust in the beginning. 'Why do you contact me, and not him?' 'What is your real agenda?' 'Why do you always treat Jews and Muslims differently?' Such preconceptions and perceptions cloud communication and create misunderstandings.[79]

However, the largest potential unintended consequences were raised in the context of interdiction and mitigation where concern was expressed that communication could scare the public, create message fatigue or promote over-reactions that could potentially overburden responding services with false alerts. One UK interviewee referred to examples of members of the public being needlessly afraid of Muslim individuals wearing rucksacks on the tube following 7/7.[80] Concern about provoking fear was also noted by Danish practitioners, with one suggesting:

> This is communication on a knife's edge. It is a delicate balance between transmitting important messages and scaring people. Communicating about terrorism in public is tricky in terms of not saying anything wrong or saying something that can be misunderstood. Really, communication is everything here.[81]

Some UK officials were particularly concerned that pre-event mitigation communication could scare the public. Indeed, one police officer suggested that transport police handing out *Run, Hide, Tell* leaflets during Counter-Terrorism Week in 2014 'basically sent the fear of God into people who were on the London transport network'.[82] However, this may be a reflection of the perception of public panic rather than evidenced fear, with other interviewees suggesting that it had little impact. As such the objective of not causing harm can make practitioners reluctant to address important topics. As one UK local authority interviewee suggested, 'as a state we are scared of surfacing latent conflict, and agencies are, and we do not speak of such things for fear that we will make it worse'.[83] While this

reluctance is being overcome to a degree in the UK, in Denmark there are few large-scale interdiction or mitigation communication campaigns exactly because of 'fears of feeding over-reactions'.[84]

Challenge Four: Content and Timing of Communications

Communicative content and the speed at which information can be disseminated make up the fourth challenge that is relevant at all three counter-terrorism stages. For instance, prevention messages conveying how to recognise signs of vulnerability are complex, as are many of the counter-narratives practitioners seek to promote. Indeed, one UK officer suggested that on some occasions the police had to produce communications that 'we don't have the skillset to deliver'.[85] Interviewees in both countries also mentioned the difficulties in ensuring message consistency because of the complexity of the communication or due to staff only receiving basic training. A Danish local authority officer suggested that if radicalisation prevention measures are expanded too fast miscommunication is likely.[86] Similarly, members of a Danish local radicalisation prevention unit expressed concern about recruiting new workshop instructors as demand has risen. This led to the development of a 'workshop manual' for less experienced workshop instructors, which conveys 'dos and don'ts' of communicating with different audiences. A UK practitioner provided an example of how inexperienced or contracted staff can make errors:

> We went down the line of employing specialist agencies in communications, which was equally as flawed, because they just didn't understand the nuances of the language and you use one word out of place and all of a

sudden you're not sending counter-narrative, you're actually undermining a

key element of the Muslim faith.[87]

The timing of content delivery is also a challenge – partly because of the difficulty in keeping pace with terrorist propaganda. There was a perception amongst some interviewees that terrorist communications are speedier than government messaging and disseminated in larger bulk. This concern seemed to be more pressing in the UK. One UK community organisation argued that government communications are "dwarfed" by the communications of terrorist groups.[88] A UK police officer suggested that:

ISIL have got a really sophisticated communication platform, and they're

very clever at mixing everyday life with acts of terrorism […] we have

budgetary constraints that these organisations don't have, and they are

able to pump that out and our response to that, again, needs to be

regulated, needs to be checked, we need to look at guidelines, policy,

what message do we want to send out there? By the time we've checked

all that and formulated an appropriate response, there might have been

500 tweets gone out.[89]

Another officer outlined that Daesh are:

Pretty good at comms, we're dealing with people that have been through

university and they've done social media and they are pretty slick. You

look at some of the videos coming out of Syria and they are very, very impactive.[90]

For interdiction communication the primary challenge in relation to content is to explain what 'suspicious' behaviour looks like. One local Danish prevention provider stressed how they were often 'met with a demand for a list of concrete signs of suspicious behaviour to report' from non-security focused partners.[91] Many documents in the grey literature attempt to do this and there is a wide body of advice in both countries, including for a range of industries. Nevertheless, in the context of small scale terrorist attack planning challenges remain. One UK interviewee reflected that when communicating about the IRA it could be quite obvious what signs to look out for, such as someone buying a car with cash and without documentation, but that with lone-actors it is more difficult:

> There was a lot of indicators there, and especially up in the bomb factories in Leeds, to say if we'd got the messages right somebody might've rung up […] Very difficult for an individual who's radicalised on his computer in his back room, who goes into his kitchen, picks up a knife and goes out and stabs somebody. What can you say to the general public about that?[92]

A further issue concerns accuracy. This is applicable for all three stages but is often especially problematic for mitigation messages due to the need to communicate quickly after an incident. Communicating quickly after an event can be important for a range of reasons, including providing advice, reducing fear and maintaining public trust

in the authorities.[93] Several challenges are associated with swift and accurate delivery of communications. As a Cabinet Office report highlights:

> The key to effective communication with the public is getting the message right for the right audience, balancing the need to rapidly disseminate information with the methods available at the time of the emergency. How information and advice are delivered can greatly affect how they are received.[94]

A UK security services official also reflected on the importance of rapid communications:

> One of the things that we learnt most recently is as an incident is breaking and is still on-going, is to communicate quickly at the time, regular short communication is a good thing which the public appreciate, although you can't tell them what's going on because you may not know what's going on, but you can say to them that there's things are just what we are working on.[95]

However, the lack of accurate information in the immediate aftermath often means authorities may be forced to disseminate partial information.

Challenge Five: Partnership working

The challenges of partnership working are pertinent to a range of policy issues,[96] but appear particularly relevant for counter-terrorism communication and are related to the

challenges of timely communications outlined above. Interviewees explained this challenge in terms of the scale of counter-terrorism activity, the number of agencies involved, the complex and fast-paced nature of the work, a lack of clarity about respective responsibilities, legal complexities around information sharing and contrasting organisational cultures. The majority of interviewees in both countries felt that core statutory partners were committed to a shared agenda, providing many examples of effective partnership working. However, coordination is reportedly often a challenge, which can result in fragmented or inconsistent communications.

One important reason for this was the number of agencies delivering the same agenda. This is particularly so in the UK where more agencies deliver counter-terrorism communications. For instance, a local authority Prevent officer suggested that:

> The funny thing about Prevent is there are different people delivering Prevent. So you've got local authorities, you've got the police, NHS and other people and we may randomly do the same things but at different times. So the police might do something on the internet and then we'll do something on the internet. Sometimes there is a bit of a non-marrying up of timelines.[97]

Another UK interviewee described a central government letter sent to local authority Children's' Services Directors advertising a hotline for concerns about young people traveling to Syria. According to the interviewee, some Children's Services teams were initially confused by this as they already had established reporting pathways via local

authority Prevent leads.[98] Regarding mitigation, the *Run, Hide, Tell* campaign was released publicly during Counter-Terrorism Week by British Transport Police. According to one senior officer the campaign was initially meant to be part of the wider Project Griffin training for security professionals only. However, reportedly:

> Some forces took it in their own remit to hand them out to Joe public coming off the train. It was never made to be delivered to a member of the public who hadn't been through the full security briefing […] it shouldn't just be getting handed to someone without an explanation.[99]

The officer felt that ultimately no adverse impact resulted from this release, but suggested that it nevertheless represented 'a little bit of a breakdown in communication'.[100]

Communications can also be delayed or fragmented because of the number of partners involved. As one UK police interviewee described:

> So if we have an issue, we take it away, gather our partners, bring the Home Office in and then we come to some consensus of views as to what we should say, well you've burned three weeks and the public locally don't care anymore.[101]

Another senior UK security official suggested that 'the most significant challenge is actually around the number of stakeholders that are connected' to the messaging. He provided an example of a planned attack on the London Stock Exchange, where the

nature of the attack and location of the plotters and target meant that five different policing bodies were involved alongside the Crown Prosecution Service and MI5. He reflected that this meant:

> We've got seven fairly tricky, big stakeholders to manage over simple messaging and quite often very tight timeframes over how quickly you respond, and particularly for things like social media stuff now, then you have to have much, much faster time decision making to respond to that social media pressure. So that's, I think, the biggest challenge to CT policing.[102]

Sharing of sensitive information was another key challenge raised. Although raised by practitioners in both states it was highlighted as a bigger factor by Danish interviewees. In Denmark, one city's relative success in prevention was attributed to the use of a cross-disciplinary task force, involving the Department of Youth, Department of Social Affairs, local police and schools, Social Affairs and Police consultants based at schools.[103] However, the legal design of collaboration, such as information sharing, as well as organisational factors, including administrative backing and funding, was a challenge from the outset. This issue reportedly exists in other municipalities.

Cultural barriers were also cited as a challenge to partnership working. Danish interviewees and handbooks on radicalisation prevention pointed to how stakeholders approach cases of radicalisation with different perspectives.[104] The teacher focuses on the students' general well-being at school, the social worker cares about the family situation whilst the policeman is concerned with illegal activity.[105] Agreeing on what

should be done, and what the end-goal is can therefore be difficult.[106] UK officials reported similar experiences. One security services official reflected on meetings with the NHS, and his frustration with their seemingly slow pace of implementation. He later accepted that their concerns that a fast implementation of radicalisation training for staff would have caused backlash were legitimate and that, 'the policing approach of we charge in and we do it and make things happen was never going to work in the NHS', ultimately concluding that the NHS became one of their best partners for internal communication.[107]

Such issues may stem in part from lack of common communication principles or joint plans. For instance, one local authority Prevent officer suggested that the limits of local communications are a consequence of the lack of an over-arching communication strategy, suggesting that:

> One of the other areas that we need to really explore and strengthen is just having a clear communication strategy because at the moment it is all a bit ad hoc. The reason we don't have a local strategy is because there's no national strategy to drive that, so it's all a bit patchy.[108]

Challenge Six: Media

The final challenge identified was the potential for the media to undermine counter-terrorism communications. Many interviewees recognised the importance of the media in helping to disseminate messages and provided examples of positive interactions. One UK security official, for example, felt that *Prevent Tragedies* had been positively picked up by the media,[109] whilst a UK local authority officer described using the media

to help promote *Not in My Name,* which challenged Daesh's assertion to represent Muslims.[110] Others spoke of developing good relations with the press, with one security official suggesting that, 'for us to get stories into the media, I don't think it's that difficult'[111] and another highlighting that the media is helpful in disseminating requests for public information that could disrupt a planned attack.[112] Danish practitioners emphasised that radicalisation events or terrorist attacks are important opportunities to use the press to engage with the wider public. For instance, intense media interest following the February 2015 Copenhagen terrorist attacks allowed practitioners to explain counter-terrorism approaches and successes.[113]

Despite this, several interviewees in both countries suggested that the media made their work more difficult in two regards. Firstly, sections of the press were considered to focus on extremist voices from Muslim communities rather than the majority who condemn terrorism. There was concern that this contributes to the myth that extremist individuals represent the Muslim community, which can cause social harm. This includes feeding the narrative of right-wing groups and perpetuating 'us and them' divisions.[114] One UK faith organisation suggested that:

> Overwhelmingly [the press] allow these side-line characters who preach division and talk about things like making England a Muslim state and all that, they give them too much time on television over the last few years and it's sensationalism and it promotes negative stereotypes.[115]

Another interviewee from the UK security services described meetings with Muslim leaders who voiced concerns that such stories undermined community cohesion and the work they were doing.[116] Similarly, a UK police officer suggested that:

> The more positive messaging tends not to get the publicity. There are certain papers that thrive on the paedophile element, the beheading […] I come back to Muslim individuals, community groups' efforts that will never reach the media. At the same events that they're holding to counteract terrorism and there have been Muslim communities that have actually held their own conferences, the media's not interested, but the next day they'll be saying, 'Why do Muslims never stand up and oppose, why are they not opposing IS?'[117]

Similarly, a Danish security service officer involved in community outreach said:
> We have experienced how carefully crafted relations and trust have been undermined or challenged by negative media stories that do not clearly state who are the source of criticism about e.g. a particular Muslim community. Feeling exposed communities may retract from collaboration even though we try to explain to them that we are not behind such stories.[118]

Secondly, several interviewees criticised sections of the media for Islamophobia and suggested that this alienates some Muslims from mainstream society, potentially making some more vulnerable to extremist narratives. One UK local authority suggested that, 'there are high levels of Islamophobia in society. Particularly in the

media – I think that's apparent'.[119] A UK police officer focused on the impact of this, suggesting that for young Muslims:

> The biggest grievance they have is against the media […] if a young person's already feeling that they don't belong in the West… they're not integrated or they don't belong in their community and then they see on the tele[vision] constantly the media showing Muslims in a bad light, then that definitely is a big factor and I can see that being a hook for people with extreme ideologies to then go on to radicalise young people.[120]

Similarly, some Danish practitioners suggested that the tabloid media 'demonize' certain Islamic milieus and mosques in ways that make communication about such settings difficult. Several interviewees involved in counter-radicalisation efforts found it important in their communications to impose a more balanced view and to counter 'media stereotypes' of Islam.[121]

Discussion: Implications for improving counter-terrorism communication

This study confirms and extends insights from the counter-terrorism and coproduction literature, and indicates that existing counter-terrorism communications may need to be adapted to address the contemporary terrorist threat. The data not only identifies challenges, but points to some ways in which these challenges can be addressed.

Literature confirmation and extension

This paper contributes to six key arguments in the counter-terrorism and coproduction literature. Firstly, it demonstrates that practitioner perceptions are aligned with

research suggesting that the contemporary trend of small-scale terrorism committed by lone-actors or small, self-organised cells, whilst not a new phenomenon,[122] is a growing and uniquely difficult threat for European states to counter or address.[123] Although attack planning makes the actor(s) somewhat vulnerable to detection, interviewees mirrored research outlining that such attacks are more challenging to prevent and interdict than larger, organised group attacks.[124] Some interviewees attributed this to difficulty in identifying potential attackers because of social isolation and online radicalisation, which corresponds with insights from the field.[125] Others focused on the challenges of interdicting small, low tech attacks. Referring to specific locations and possible targets some interviewees suggested that potential lone-actors would be 'very unfortunate to be detected' or that if an attacker was well prepared 'there's very little that could be done to prevent that from happening.[126] Such findings build on previous comments from senior security professionals and research which focuses on the difficulties of detecting lone actor and small-scale plots.[127]

Secondly, the data (particularly from the UK) supports the literature in locating counter-terrorism communication as a crucial aspect of overall strategy.[128] According to one UK security services officer, 'communication with the public has never been more important […] you're only going to deal with those issues [radicalisation] through effective communication with the public'.[129] Another suggested that communication is:

A really important part of each of the stages [prevent, interdiction and mitigation], we underestimate at our peril […] you can have stuff which is technically brilliant in terms of the rest of the policing package. If you get the

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> communications wrong, or the relationship management side of it wrong, then
>
> you can turn what was a success into a bit of a fail pretty quickly.[130]

A central government official suggested that, 'strategic communications has a very tangible real-world effect […] it's a very important part of the toolkit'.[131]

Thirdly, and closely linked to the previous point, is that coproduction is necessary for the management of contemporary terrorist threats to Europe, whether that be Islamist, extreme far-right or another form, which will in part be secured through effective communication. The data highlighted the need for active public support to counter terrorism. Such views reinforce and expand on coproduction literature exploring the importance of the public in crime prevention and management and support previous statements by senior practitioners that focus on the role of public contributions.[132]

Fourthly, the data went some way beyond existing research concerning the need to enlist the support of non-security focused front-line professionals to recognise vulnerabilities to radicalisation - subsequently making them important audiences for counter-terrorism communications designed to enhance coproduction.[133] Interviewees also outlined specific communicative strategies for securing support, such as framing preventative work within a safeguarding lexicon. A UK local authority officer suggested that when communications were framed in these terms 'you'd really see that light bulb moment, in front-line practitioners, social workers who've worked in social services for 30 years, just waking up to the fact that actually, "Yes"'.[134] Similarly, a UK police officer suggested that:

> When we used to go and talk to the Youth Offending Service, the
> police weren't very well liked within the Youth Offending Service. So
> when we were able to set it in that safeguarding context, people
> actually got what we were doing.[135]

This finding indicates the potential for coproduction studies to look beyond traditional units of analysis. Counter-terrorism communication should focus on a broad range of audiences and consider professional lexicons and framings to enhance buy-in from specific audiences. As one Danish security service officer put it: 'The key is to embed the message in the discourse of the target group'.[136]

Fifthly, the data reinforced research arguing that counter-terrorism communication (like other disaster communication), can have negative consequences.[137] The two primary issues raised were that preventative communications, such as counter-narratives, could stigmatise communities or make them feel targeted, and that interdiction or pre-event mitigation communications could increase public fear about terrorism. The academic debates about the positive and negative impacts of counter-terror communication were clearly reflected in the practitioner interviews, where opinions were divided. Many practitioners considered counter-narratives an essential component of CT work, whilst others highlighted the potential for negative consequences, as has been raised in previous research.[138] Similarly, whilst some practitioners were concerned about causing public panic, others felt that pre-event mitigation campaigns did not cause social harm and urged authorities to be bolder in their communications to prepare the public. This aligns with literature suggesting that the propensity of the public to 'panic' has been overstated.[139] Both the extent to which

counter-terrorism communication can alarm the public and the impact of counter-narratives appear to be areas where further research is required.

Finally, security professionals and community and faith sector interviewees were aligned with literature suggesting that Daesh propaganda is effective and that government communications, at times, do not keep pace and are a counter-terrorism weakness.[140] This article extends understandings of this challenge by incorporating a domestic element, whereby local actors' undermined communications designed to counter extremist and terrorist propaganda by seeking to challenge local preventative strategies.

Policy Considerations

The data, combined with insights from the literature, suggest that the adaptation and scale of existing counter-terrorism communications to respond to the threat of small-scale, low tech attacks by fostering the coproduction of security with a broad range of actors is necessary. This is especially relevant in light of the fact that the authors could identify only a small number of documents designed specifically to address lone-actor or small-scale terrorism in the UK and Denmark. As UK counter-terrorism practitioners noted, 'we do not really have any tools that talk about lone-actors',[141] 'there's nothing that I can think of that's gone out to communities specifically on lone-actors',[142] and 'in terms of one-to-one communication, trying to target those potential lone-actors and all those sorts of things, then I would probably suggest we don't have a sophisticated plan'.[143]

Of course, some existing communications include content that is relevant to small-scale terrorism. For instance, the UK National Counter Terrorism Security Office's *Counter Terrorism Protective Security Advice for Hotels and Restaurants* includes information about protective measures to take against suicide bombers. In Denmark, some broader communications (primarily training packages) include aspects such as a lone shooter scenario as part of a wider interdiction workshop for businesses. Nevertheless, the limited content is surprising considering recent studies argue that the characteristics of lone-attackers indicate that specific counter measures, including communications, are necessary.[144] Countries without communication interventions specifically targeted towards lone-actor or small group attacks are potentially lacking a crucial element to address terrorist threats. Similarly, the difficulties of detecting such attacks suggests that communication to secure coproduction for interdiction and mitigation may be necessary in Denmark and other European countries that currently do not communicate on a large scale.

Interviewee concerns about inconsistent communication and lack of coordination indicate that new communication measures should fit within over-arching communication plans and be supported with guidance or handbooks for practitioners. The specificities of new communications will need detailed consideration as, to date, there has been little empirical analysis that could guide the design and implementation of communication measures for low tech, small-scale terrorism.[145] However, our research has identified broad policy options for practitioners to consider as approaches for improving communication aimed at preventing, interdicting and mitigating terrorism through security coproduction.

Preventing radicalisation

The difficulties of interdicting low sophistication, small-scale attacks, and the lack of research for mitigating this type of attack, suggest that the prevention stage could take on increased significance. Analysis of interview data alongside radicalisation literature indicates that practitioners planning communication to prevent radicalisation should consider three specific issues to enhance coproduction.[146] The first is the mode of communication delivery designed to secure the support of people most likely to come into contact with vulnerable individuals. This paper has outlined the limits of existing communications because of issues such as limited credibility. Practitioners and community representatives were clear that face-to-face communication was an important way to overcome this so that questions could be answered and trust developed. For instance, one UK local authority interviewee described a long-standing community advisory group that enabled monthly meetings between Prevent practitioners and key community representatives from faith and community organisations. This has reportedly been successful in creating a safe space for open discussions, to share information and understand what extremist narratives have traction locally which can then be challenged in larger forums.[147] Such policies could require significant resources, but practitioners in both countries were clear that this was the most effective way to secure support for radicalisation prevention programmes.

Secondly, there may be a need to diversify the range of individuals receiving training on how to recognise and report signs of radicalisation. Bouhana *et al.* note that, 'little if any specificity is known about the nature of the places where lone-actor radicalisation happens'.[148] As such, ensuring that a broad and appropriate collection of people are

trained to recognise vulnerabilities is essential.[149] Finite resources mean that some audiences will need to be prioritised based on the features of potential lone-actor or small group terrorism. For instance, lone-actors are considered more likely to suffer from mental ill-health and psychological disorders, be older than group-based terrorists and more likely to be unemployed.[150] In addition to focusing training to school teachers or social workers, training targeted towards mental health professionals or housing officers – individuals more likely to deal with individuals that have common lone-actor traits – may become more important. Additionally, communication to increase the wider public's understanding of, and trust in, radicalisation prevention programmes is likely to be important because of leakage (the intentional or unintentional communication to a third party of an intent to do harm to a target).[151] This a common behaviour exhibited by terrorists acting alone or not directed by a larger group and as such public reporting of this behaviour could be an essential form of coproduction.[152]

Finally, overcoming the challenge of working with community/faith sector and business voices perceived to be credible to targeted audiences and securing their support in delivering communications to targeted groups in society is important. Credible counter (or alternative) narratives are potentially of heightened importance because of recent high-profile propaganda efforts by terrorist groups that encourage attacks in Europe.[153] Despite the limits and risks of preventative communications, including counter-narratives, the data is clear that those that are most effective will be delivered from community leaders, with the role of government limited to enabler where required.[154] The findings in this paper indicate that whilst the primary challenge is securing the support of credible voices, the issue of reach and timing will also need to be addressed given the reported limits of the online presence of many groups. This is

problematic considering findings which suggest that the internet often plays a prominent role within radicalisation.[155] Investment in the capacity of credible community organisations to deliver messages, such as website construction and social media training, may thus be necessary.

Interdiction

This section sets out three issues for policy-makers to consider regarding interdiction communication. Firstly, as noted, one of the main differences between UK and Danish counter-terrorism communication is the lack of large-scale public campaigns in Denmark because of concerns about scaring the public. However, the difficulties of applying traditional interdiction methods to lone-actors or small groups, (e.g. their more common levels of social marginalisation and increased promotion of this sort of attack by terrorist groups) means that public support in recognising and reporting suspicious signs will be crucial. As such public campaigns may need to be a more central feature of communications across Europe – particularly given the high levels of leakage associated with such attacks.[156]

Secondly, securing the support of a wider spectrum of businesses to communicate with their staff and customers takes on added importance in light of features particular to low sophistication, small scale attacks, including selection and surveillance of targets and weapon selection.[157] With analysts having highlighted the near impossibility of target-hardening soft civilian targets, support for developing a vigilance culture becomes increasingly important.[158] Whilst interdiction of low sophistication attacks can be more difficult, it is nevertheless the case that reconnaissance remains a vulnerability, with the potential for detection and disruption at its highest.[159] Securing

support is likely to require more detailed briefings to emphasise the risk of attacks. A security consultant who advises large firms suggested that currently many businesses consider the likelihood of lone-actor attacks as 'incredibly slim', suggesting that 'they don't know enough' and that some businesses consider government counter-terrorism campaigns as 'over-kill'.[160]

Finally, closer cooperation with the media could increase reporting of leakage. One study suggests that in 58.8% of lone-actor cases offenders produced letters or public statements outlining their beliefs. Alongside self-printed leaflets and statements in virtual forums, these statements included letters to newspapers.[161] As such Gill's suggestion that media outlets who receive letters advocating extremist propaganda and agendas may play a key role in detecting and disrupting attacks seems highly relevant.[162]

Mitigation

The difficulties of interdiction and increasing prevalence of small-scale attacks means that preparing the public in advance about protective behaviours could be increasingly important. For example, stopping to record an attack on mobile phones, as happened during incidents in Woolwich and Leytonstone, may put the public at more risk. The UK has begun such communications through its *Run, Hide, Tell* campaign but no such large scale campaigns exist in Denmark.

A second issue centres on content designed to mitigate the social impact (e.g. fear) of low sophistication attacks.[163] The murder of Lee Rigby in 2013 highlighted the impact small scale, low sophistication attacks can have and that unique mitigation could be

required to reassure the public and manage community tensions. Existing research on effective communication for mitigating terrorist attacks tends to focus on more sophisticated attacks, such as chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) terrorism.[164] There has been little research on how to mitigate, for instance, lone knife attacks from a communication perspective and it is less clear how the public might respond. Compared to other parts of the world, Europe is also relatively inexperienced in dealing with shooters. As such, mitigation communication may need to be enhanced or adapted and draw on the experiences of non-European states. Policies to address social cohesion must include more pro-active reassurance from government and community actors, as well as closer work with the media to temper some reporting.

Finally, whilst research on the area is limited, both researchers and practitioners indicate the potential for copycat attacks. This suggests a need for credible and rapid condemnation of attacks to deter potential attackers who may be inspired by what they have seen.[165] Pantucci argues that the a series of attacks in Germany in July 2016 may have been 'accelerated' by earlier attacks,[166] whilst investigators suggested that knife attacks in consecutive days in France in December 2014 had a 'copycat connection'.[167] One study of lone-actor terrorism found that 26.9% of lone-actors had read literature or propaganda concerning other lone-actors.[168] This makes the challenge of securing the support of credible community and faith partners increasingly critical.

Conclusion

Small-scale, low sophistication terrorist attacks are an increasingly important security concern for many European states. Their unique features require the support of the

public and other actors to contribute to the coproduction of security, in terms of preventing, interdicting and mitigating these attacks. Consequently, effective communication directed at a range of audiences to explain the risks and enlist their support through a variety of actions, such as reporting suspicious behaviours, is likely to be an even more important feature of counter-terrorism strategies. Despite this, there is only limited research addressing effective counter-measures and interventions for this sort of attack. This is especially so in terms of communication measures, where there is minimal empirical research to identify the most appropriate communication strategies or modes of implementation.

Based on a review of existing counter-terrorism communications in the UK and Denmark, it becomes clear that there is a wide range of existing communication products. However, few are specifically focused on small group or lone actor style attacks. Furthermore, whilst the UK has significant campaigns for the prevention, interdiction and mitigation stages of an attack, Denmark does not have any large campaigns focused specifically on terrorism interdiction or mitigation. There is little data in either country about the effectiveness of communication interventions.

This paper has provided an overview of existing communication challenges in the UK and Denmark to provide a much-needed empirical basis to allow the development and testing of new or adapted communication measures. It has highlighted six challenges that will need to be addressed and considered during the design or adaptation process. Some of these challenges reinforce and add nuance to known challenges, such as the lack of state credibility in the eyes of some audiences, whilst others are

less well understood, such as the issue of counter-communication designed to undermine radicalisation prevention communications.

In exploring the challenges and approaches in the UK and Denmark some significant differences were identified. The two most important differences were the decision in Denmark not to conduct large-scale communication campaigns for fear of scaring the public compared to the increasing use of such campaigns in the UK. Additionally, efforts are being made in the UK to recruit credible community and faith voices to deliver communications – something that has not yet been prioritised in Denmark. Several of the challenges appear particularly acute in the UK. This is partly a consequence of a more organised anti-Prevent lobby but primarily stems from the fact that the UK delivers more communication products and on a larger scale. Despite differences in intensity, the thematic challenges and experiences are strikingly similar across the two different contexts, as is message content and audience prioritisation. This suggests that findings may be of use to policy-makers in a range of states as they develop or amend their own communication strategies and that similar challenges can be expected in different national contexts.

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