

Assignment 1 – 2217676 – BMPL6012 – Caleb Salmon

“Critically examine the challenges associated with investigating the different types of cyber-crime and police responses designed to combat these challenges”

Online radicalisation is a key principle and requirement for modern day terrorism and violence, within the context of modern-day policing, radicalisation often takes place within cyber space and online forums, changing how police traditional respond to battle this. Radicalisation is described as “the process through which a person – child or adult – comes to support or become involved in extremist ideologies” (Petty 2025) and due to the extremist element of the ideologies, the majority of these occurrences can be concurrent with an element of cyber-crime which presents distinctive investigative challenges for the police and how they respond to combat these incidents. Policing these matters is extremely important and complex due to the violent tendencies which often result from the extremist ideologies which perpetuate these violent offenses, with a poll representing that “29% of the public believing that the threat of terrorism has increased “a lot” “(YouGov 2025) maintaining and increasing the effectiveness of the policing methods regarding online extremism has become of paramount importance not just from a social perspective , but logistically due to the ever increasing presence of online connectivity through social media applications allowing people from all over the world to be exposed to some form of radicalisation more easily than ever. Within policing framework, the United Kingdom's police services suffer unique critiques and challenges in the context of online radicalisation but with methods such as CONTEST

and referrals to the prevent programme which allows not just individualised methods of prevention from radicalisation but ensures “communities are protected against radicalising influences.” (Home Office 2025) which furtherly aids in the safety of the public. However, there are still gaps within these preventative measures and programmes alongside rising tensions which shall be critically examined within this essay.

The challenges that occur when investigating online radicalisation are plenty, with even varying public definitions of radicalisation presenting itself as a challenge before evidence and measures are even in place, with the term “‘radicalisation’ remaining an area of ongoing debate and contested terminology.” (Chisholm, et al 2025). With this ambiguity being present the legislation is often shrouded in contention due to the everchanging parameters of the investigation that police and other agencies may be a part of. This presents itself as a minor challenge to law enforcement. A counter measure to this challenge is the inclusivity of the police services and other agencies in the identification of people who may be at risk of radicalisation or are currently on the pathway to being radicalised; with the prevent pathway (a programme that the police and the home office use) stating that “There is no single profile of a radicalised person, nor is there a single pathway” (Home Office 2023). This definition allows for a broader perspective of the demographic at risk, further developing the understanding that radicalisation should be viewed as a crime which may affect anyone within the public scope, aiding police and other agencies in effectively deterring any stereotypes which may be present in the view of the police services.

Prevent is a government curated early intervention system which is used as “one of the four strands of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, known as Contest.”

(Morris, 2023) and within the context of radicalisation is the most prevalently used by the Police Service and other agencies such as Social Services when at risk individuals are seen to be involved. An effective element of the prevent programme is how it allows itself to be fitting to those at risk of radicalisation. One key mechanism which is used within the programme is categorisation, with three categories which are used to analyse the statutory and personal vulnerabilities a person may face such as economic difficulties and duties of care regarding a family member a person may possess; it also includes most importantly the ideological vulnerabilities a person may have which can be fostered under the influence of radicalisation to include a “justification for a ‘them and us’ perspective, and foster a sense of grievance and injustice.” (Shawcross, 2023). This categorisation which is used within partnership of primarily the police and social services allows for an identification of people who are most at risk of radicalisation can aid in the mitigation and decrease of future terrorist activities and can be seen as a strength of how the police investigate radicalisation within the UK. On the other hand, the prevent programme isn't without its limitations, its primary weakness comes in terms of its provision, with the “engagement and funding of local partners” (Hindle, 2009) becoming increasingly difficult to effectively undertake, due to economic barriers such as lack of funding due to government allocation changing and the coordination of agencies becoming more inconsistent; allowing for an increasing number of participants not receiving the aid that they deserve.

In the context of cybercrime; the police methodology to combat it often overlaps with that of radicalisation due to the frequency of it occurring online. But due to the increase in connectivity, it is becoming increasingly difficult to manage effectively, however whilst not following traditional policing methods, the introduction of the counter terrorism operations centre in 2018 has led the way in “providing the UK with a more effective and integrated counter-terror operation.” (Hall et al , 2023) with an increase in counter terrorism methods such as the increased reliance of the counter terrorism internet referral unit or “CTIRU” which monitors and removes content within social and public media, primarily within an online domain and allows and aids with police services with investigations by providing evidence of extremist behaviours and ideologies, launched in 2010 it has led to “226 counter-terrorism investigations across the UK being supported or provided with key evidence and information from the CTIRU.” (CTP, 2018).

However, this form of active monitoring and regulation in the context of the policing radicalisation is extremely reliant on the online element of the activity, as platform and application cooperation alongside the legislative jurisdiction of a country which may harbour where the information has come from. On the other hand, the introduction of the new online safety act of 2023, does significantly aid in minimising the at-risk demographic of people who may be exposed to radicalisation within social media. In the context of children these measures include integrating “age limits and use age-checking measures” (ICC ,2025) and for adults who may be at risk, these parameters

include a more in-depth enforcement of the terms and services of a website to hold the companies to account whilst maintaining a high level of internet safety.

From a statistical perspective, these introductions that were previously mentioned have been shown to have differing results in the context of the investigation and policing of radicalisation within the United Kingdom. Firstly, the prevent programme which was first introduced in 2005 by the labour government and within recent years has seen to have had “6,922 referrals to due to concerns that an individual was susceptible to radicalisation” , (Office for national statistics, 2024) (Within the years 2023-24) this large number of referrals , primarily from the education sector “2,788; 40%” (Office for national statistics, 2024) does show evidence of efficient cross agency partnerships as different sectors (education, care and community) have all been seeing to have been playing an active role in aiding police investigation and mitigating radicalisation within their areas. Secondly, the introduction of the newly made CTIRU police team has aided in proactively policing online forms of radicalisation by stemming the flow of media within different applications; “Since its inception in February 2010, CTIRU has secured the removal of more than 220,000 pieces of terrorist-related content.” (Rudd ,2017) this large number does not just secure the safety of people online from the threat of radicalisation within social media spaces but can be shown to be an extremely effective method of investigating radicalisation with CTIRU being responsible for “key evidence and information in over 200 counter terrorism investigations.” (TLCVEP, 2019). These proactive methods of investigation have shown to be statistically effective in the reduction of radicalisation and therefore of potential

future terror plots and possible attacks. Increasing the safety and reducing the harm to the public of the UK.

However as previously mentioned the positive statistical trends that have been a result of the policing methods have not been a complete fix for the removal of the threat of radicalisation in the United Kingdom. In the scope of social tensions rising, especially with the occurrence of the Israel and Palestine war which has given rise to an increase in social division further fuelling an increase in far right associated nationalism which contains extremist ideologies associated with radicalisation, arrest statistics within 2024 “shows 95% of minors charged under counter-terrorism offences associate with extreme-right ideologies.” (Institute for strategic dialogue, 2024). This predominant and past method of focusing primarily on the assumption of Islamic terror being the most common product of radicalisation has become outdated, with “6,313 cases of anti-Muslim hate” (Rawnsley, 2025) being recorded within 2025, these extremist views from the far right which focus around the ideology of nationalism and anti-immigration has birthed another form of extremism and consequently , radicalisation.

As this critique has provided with both positive and negative aspects of the methods that police use when combating radicalisation, recommendations are available to be made to increase the efficiency and relieve stress on police services which have succumbed to economic strain and a lack of resources within the United Kingdom. Firstly, as previously mentioned the language used whilst recognising and referring a person who may be subject to radicalisation in my opinion must be clearer and more concise; this will allow for the necessary help to be allocated and mistreatment to be avoided, this has been affirmed by professionals with experience within the sector ,

Spinks (2023) demonstrates the necessity of “clarifying the distinction between the terms 'vulnerability' and 'susceptibility' in guidance and practice.” and the importance that vulnerability and susceptibility may be needed to be treated as separate entities, with more professional expertise available. Secondly, the changing nature of radicalisation does create the need for a mobile and fluid attitude within policing, as this may be difficult due to the severity of radicalisation and the importance of cases, regular training and updating on the threats and challenges surrounding radicalisation is essential in ensuring efficiency is maintained. This has been also recognised by the Inspectorate of the police and fire service within a report in 2023 stating the importance of “continuous professional development for Prevent strategic leads in forces.” (HMICFRS, 2023) this regular coaching will allow for police to be more adjusting when policing these serious threats.

So, in conclusion, the methods that police services use when regulating and decreasing the threat of radicalisation have been proven to be effective, but aspects of these methods can be easily modified and developed to increase the cooperation between agencies, which I personally perceive to be the key to enabling these strategies to be as successful as possible. The main threat to the public in terms of radicalisation and to the police service is its changing nature, as anyone may be subject to radicalisation within their lifetime, be it due to changes in personal circumstances no one is completely safe from it; but making sure that the police are able to effectively manage the flow of radicalisation to ensure a safe level of public protection will always be the most important aspect of policing.

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