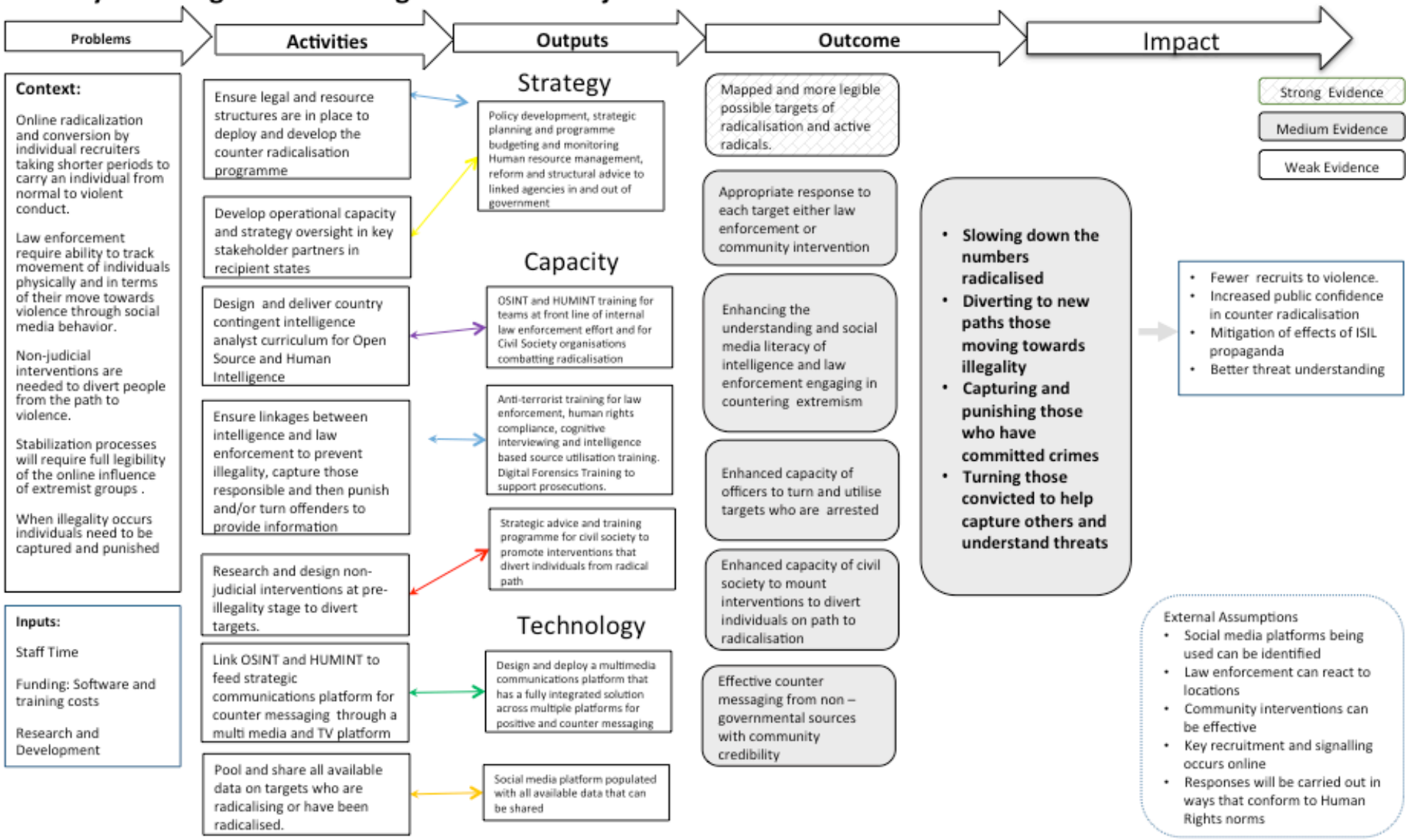
Theory of Change – Countering Extremism Project



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Context

Extremism threatens the fabric of societies across Middle East and North Africa and reaches into communities in the UK. The UK and its allies face major challenges:

1) Mapping and understanding radicalisation through social media
2) Diverting people from radicalisation before they break the law
3) Catching and punishing people after they break the law
4) De-radicalising them so they do not offend again
5) Recruiting them to become part of the struggle against the radicals

Approach

A successful response by the UK's allies requires them to think like both *the person being radicalised* and like *a smart state*. To *think like the person being radicalised* means to understand the total information environment in which they live. This includes:

- Remote profiling of their presence online
- Human source intelligence, where it exists, to map their behaviour and their connections in their community
- Ability to place them on the radicalisation spectrum and know how close they are to illegality

For this the UK and allies needs:

- Social media monitoring software that can gather big data and make it legible
- Officers trained in how to use big data and conduct remote profiling.
- To be willing to export this capability to its allies in the countries from which the main radicals are recruited.

With the right tools, these states and agencies will be able to read social media in ways that will help them predict what will happen next. To *think like a smart state* is to understand that the individual can change their mind, and that state, civil society and free market actions can help shape their thinking. It must also recognise that these different actors have comparative advantage at different points on the radicalisation spectrum – especially at the point at which the law is broken.

On one side of the legality divide, the intervention could be family, tribe, faith or civil society based. To encourage these kinds of intervention, the UK needs networks on the ground and the ability to train the closest entity that the target will listen to and respect so that a successful

intervention can take. Once the target has crossed the legality threshold the state must intervene to prevent those actions, capture the perpetrator and secure convictions. But there are a range of strategic and tactical choices to be made in shaping the response of law enforcement. These choice can determine what happens to the individual afterwards. Human Rights norms, from following correct arresting procedures with respect to proportionate use of force through to cognitive interviewing as an alternative to torture, should be followed. If they are, then the period of punishment can be used to de-radicalise and return the individual to the right side of the line. The individual can even become an asset in the fight against the radicals. For these different elements to be in place, states need partners on the ground in civil society and law enforcement who can mount the human interventions needed before radicalisation is complete and then engage through the security and justice systems in ways that bring the person rather than lose them irretrievably.

Solution Components

TSRN's work to counter extremism includes identifying and developing a set of technology and training solutions that are relevant to each aspect of the radicalisation spectrum and supporting governments in the Middle East on specific interventions. TSRN cannot deliver all aspects of these programmes itself so works with government, NGO and commercial partners who have complementary skills to provide an integrated approach to this challenge. We also build networks of stakeholders on the ground, wherever we work, because local knowledge is almost always more relevant and more useful than the knowledge of an outsider. The activities TSRN considers necessary and is currently working on with government and quasi-government agencies in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the Kurdish Region, fall into three broad categories.

Strategy Advice

- Policy development
- Strategic planning
- Programme budgeting
- Monitoring and evaluation of impact
- Human resource management
- Reform and structural advice to linked agencies in and out of government

Capacity Building

- SOCMINT: Social Media Mapping and Tracking training to identify individuals within radicalisation process and map connections
- OSINT: analytical and technique training for teams at front line of internal law enforcement effort
- HUMINT: Human Source Intelligence and Remote Profiling – understanding digital profiles to predict behaviour

- Anti-terrorist training for law enforcement, human rights compliance, cognitive interviewing and intelligence based source utilisation training.
- Judicial Training – ensuring prosecutions succeed in the context of local jurisdictions
- Digital Forensics Training to support prosecutions making the case for conspiracy charges and other acts of illegality and ensuring that digital evidence is secured and deployed correctly.
- Strategic advice and training programme for civil society to promote interventions that divert individuals from radical path
- Fellowship Programming to build grassroots networks, for example in Iraq with Fellows from the FCO funded John Smith Trust programme, the Al Hakim Foundation and the Akkad Centre for Strategic Affairs.

Technology

- Design and deploy a multimedia communications platform that has a fully integrated solution across multiple platforms for positive and counter messaging
- Social media intelligence to simplify the challenges presented by large data sets from multiple sources, populated with all available data and cases that can be shared

Impact

Though baseline measures are hard to find in this area, monitoring and evaluation can used to assess the impact of interventions. Training programmes can be assessed in terms of impact on the legibility of the problem, the slowing down of the numbers radicalised and the ability of civil society to intervene successfully to divert people to new paths away from illegality. In turn, improvements in the performance of law enforcement in the capturing and punishing of those who have committed crimes can be measured against existing benchmarks and through regular human rights compliance measurements. Successful convictions can also be mapped and classified assessments of the success of turning those who have emerged from the fundamentalist encounter can be provided.

The objective of this project is simple. If successful there will be fewer recruits to violence. This will increase public confidence in counter radicalisation and mitigate the effects of Daesh (ISIL) propaganda while providing better threat understanding of their operations and methodology.