

Iconographies of prevention.

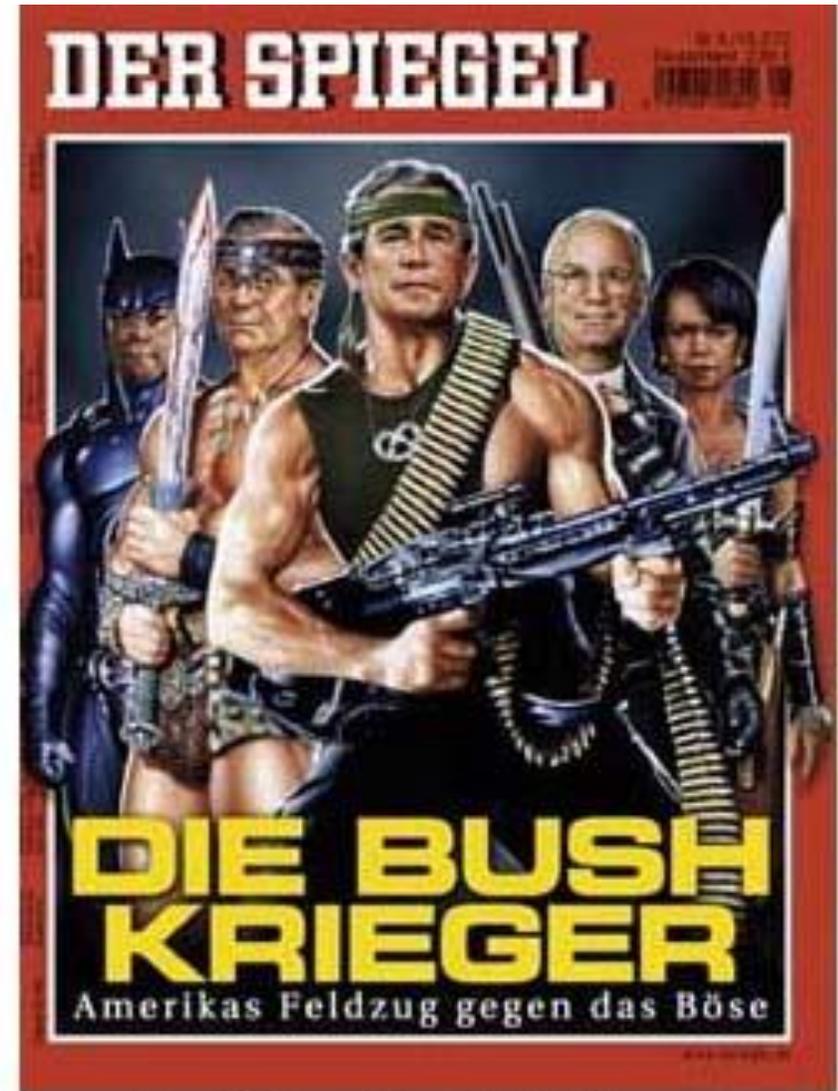
Social cohesion and the visual rhetoric of UK
counter-terrorism.

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Counter-terrorism and social cohesion: With us or with the terrorists?

Counter-terrorism – the war on terror - is presented as an abstract but needs a subject in society that presents the “threat”.

Operationally, it involves defensive measures (of process and of a physical nature) as well as identifying risky groups and making individuals with that profile the focus of securitisation activity.



Der Spiegel Nr. 8, 2002:
"Bush's Warriors—America's
Campaign Against Evil"

Counter-terrorism and social cohesion: A political business

“He is *unsafe* to run London because of his history of defending extremists in his previous job as a human rights lawyer. Ms May said Sadiq Khan's defence of extremists such as Babar Ahmad put him in a *poor position to protect Londoners* 'at a time when we face *a significant threat of terrorism*'.” (Theresa May quoted in Daily Mail, 6 May 2016)

“I am up against *somebody who poses a real danger* to London. I'm absolutely convinced of it.”
(Zak Goldsmith)

“If Sadiq Khan isn't an acceptable enough Muslim to stand for London mayor, which Muslim is?”
(Sayeeda Warsi, former chairman of the Conservative Party)



Counter-terrorism and social cohesion: A divisive business

“Efforts to control extremist narratives will backfire if we don’t get the balance right. The efforts to control extremism and limit protest by those caught by too wide a definition may undermine the very rights and British values you seek to protect.”

(Sir Peter Fahy, chief constable of Greater Manchester police, and UK Police forces’ spokesperson on Prevent)

“We cannot help detecting the McCarthyist undertones in the proposal to create blacklists and exclude and ban people deemed to be extremist.”
(Dr Shuja Shafi, Muslim Council of Britain)

Counter-terrorism and social cohesion: A speculative business

Prevent extends normal precautionary risk logic with a futuricity in which the state identifies risky people who may become a threat – rather than meeting criminal evidence threshold in the present.

Prevent's novel temporal variation on normative crime prevention, the reliance on risky identities, its predictive imperative and the accompanying legal precautionaries are based on less than precise cocktail of “British values”, an unproven pathway concept and a weak evidence base overall.

Prevent is a complex legal, political, security and social proposition. How is it being explained and represented visually?

Research Aims

What does the visuality of UK counter-terrorism look like?

How was it made/by who using what? (materiality)

What is the argumentation of the visual rhetoric?

What does it say/what effects did it/might it have? (consequentiality)

Derbyshire Police (East Midlands Prevent, run by East Midlands Special Branch)



Materiality

“It is badly produced in Adobe Photoshop and looks amateurish overall. The labels not straight and lack perspective. The whole thing looks unofficial but not in a good way – it is just incompetent. It is an attempt at creating something but is artless. It is as if someone has said let’s quickly do something for the twitter account. It actually looks like a joke.”

Northamptonshire Police Prevent Twitter Account



Preventing
vulnerable
individuals
from being
radicalised

**Safeguarding Against
Radicalisation & Extremism**



Regional UK Police Forces: Prevent on Twitter



HELP *for* HEROES

Design Expectations
NATO FORCES
a quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog



Preventing
vulnerable
individuals
from being
radicalised

**Safeguarding Against
Radicalisation & Extremism**



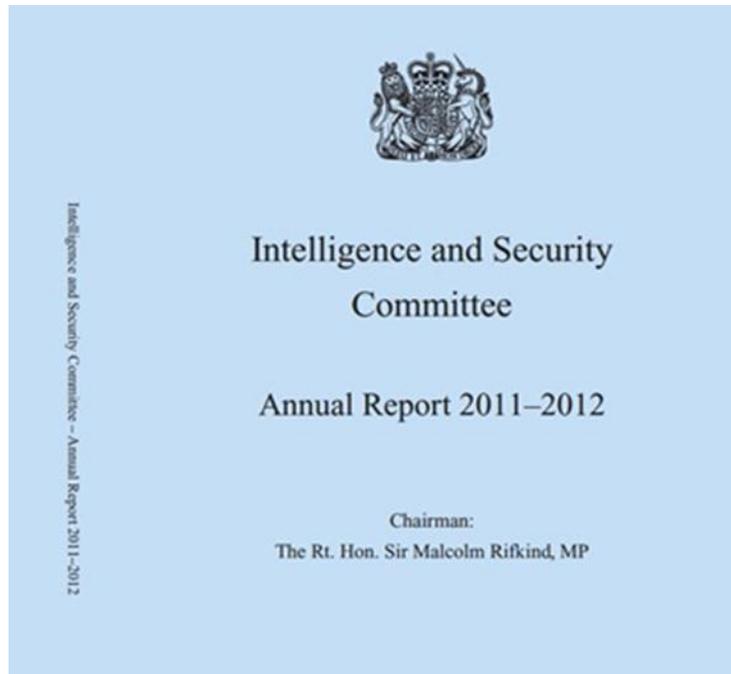
Findings

The initial phase of collection and curation found three types of visual material relating to counter-terrorism:

1. Regional local Police force online projects using a combination of:
 - a. Locally-produced material
 - b. Materials from nationwide Police or Home Office initiatives.

2. Home Office projects implemented at national level by government departments, agencies or contractors.

“Sharper and more professional counter-narrative products.”



The Home Secretary said RICU* was “currently road-testing some quite innovative approaches to counter-ideological messages”.

*Research Information and Communication Unit.

Intelligence and Security Committee (2012). Oral Evidence, Home Secretary, 19 January. Intelligence and Security Committee Annual Report 2011-2012. London: HMSO.





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FAST is a UK based organisation providing support to vulnerable families and individuals whose lives have been affected by the trauma of losing loved ones to hateful ideologies and groups. That is why we are here to help you and your family.

Learn more about the work we do →



An outsourced digital confection or visual rhetoric for moderate Muslim civic society?

FAST – Families Matter | Branding + Posters 21 July 2014 “launch event”.

“We produced the content for the folders which were handed out, and the posters that you can see in the photos – the quotes on the posters come directly from the short film made by Breakthrough Media.”

(Direct Design, 2014)

Visual rhetoric and techniques from politics.
Small scale spatial enactment to reduce risk and fit television format.



inspire

#MakingAStand

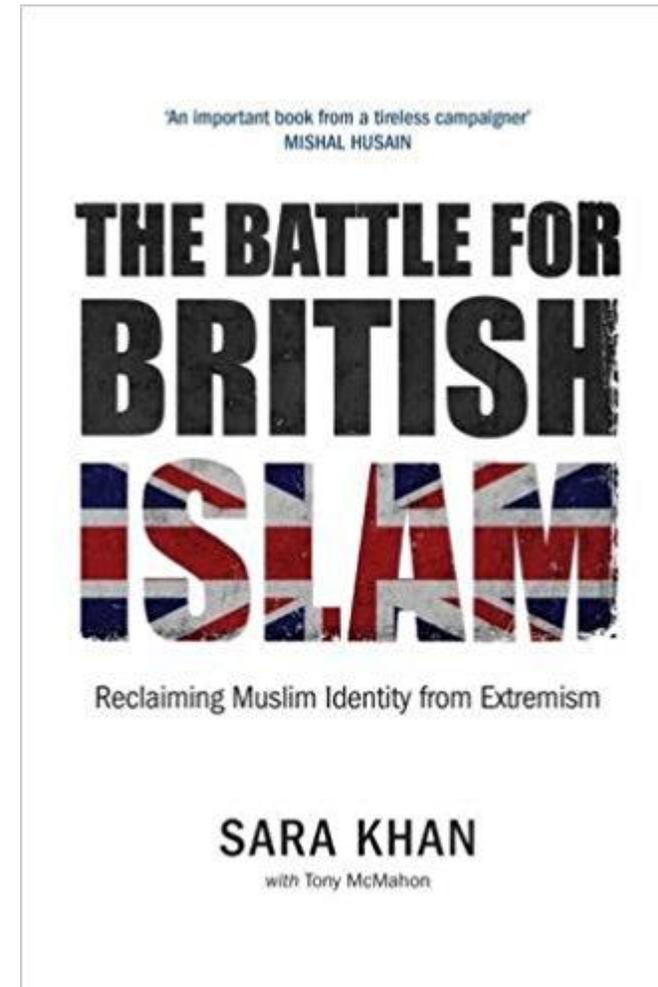
inspire



#MakingAStand

www.wewillinspire.com

Iconic exemplars of moderation: This is moderate Islam looks like



Press coverage of 24 September 2014 Inspire Making a Stand launch in London

Being moderate is not enough.
Obligation to fight back and
resist “extremists”



9 July 2015, Fightback starts here launch in London

Conclusions:

1. Local Police:

- a. Locally-produced Prevent material is poor quality, inconsistent and looks bad. The argumentation, messages and overall purpose is not clear.
- b. Weak and muddled argumentation. No pictures of people, no personal appeal that offers help, just a militaristic sense of process. Target audience is not clear, and some material seems focussed on maintaining contact with a growing Prevent clientele (NHS, teachers etc.) rather than public.
- c. Overall visual rhetoric is unconvincing, with fragmented messages perhaps reflecting fragmented implementation of Prevent

Home Office projects

“Sharper and more professional counter-narrative products” required the help of sharp, professional marketing, web design and media specialists who had previously worked in advertising and PR agencies such as M & C Saatchi, Bell Pottinger and on campaigns for the Conservative Party.

The result is a synthetic construct of state messaging on counter-terrorism combined with formulaic corporate visuality - as a result of using a corporate communications firm rather than deploying realistic representations and rhetoric of Islamic civil society.

Home Office projects Divisive visual argumentation?

“You can not be trusted because you may be extreme.”

“If you are moderate, that is no longer enough,
you need to make a stand, fight back and report on others.”

“Muslims need to decide whose side they are on”

“Since you cannot organise, we are imposing a
moderate Muslim civil society that will fight back.”

“Moderate Islam looks like this –
draped in the Union Jack.”

