The Practitioner's Guide to the Galaxy - A Comparison of Risk Assessment Tools for Violent Extremism

Authors: Liesbeth van der Heide, Marieke van der Zwan, and Maarten van Leyenhorst

This paper critically compares seven widely used risk assessment tools for violent extremism, including the VERA-2R, the ERG 22+, the SQAT, the IR46, the RRAP, the Radar, and the VAF. For each risk assessment method, the authors (1) provide background information about its country of origin, the field of expertise/discipline within which they were created, their underlying methodology (theory or case-based), and the various ways these tools are structured; (2) describe the purpose of the risk assessment tools and their respective target audience(s); and (3) elaborate on the use (practical implications) of the tools. The objective is to enable policymakers and practitioners to better navigate the often muddy, copyrighted and often expensive waters of the world of risk assessment of violent extremism—as well as to facilitate their decision-making process when it comes to determining what approach is best suited to their needs.

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Introduction

In recent years, the number of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) charged with, arrested, or incarcerated for terrorism-related offenses has increased steadily across Europe.[1] Partially this is due to the increased number of offenders (including lone actors, foreign fighter returnees, sympathisers, and homegrown terrorists) against the backdrop of the civil war in Syria and Iraq and the rise and decline of ISIS. At the same time, in response to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and EU guidelines, many governments have criminalised a range of (preparatory) offenses related to (preparing to) travel to these countries and joining or supporting terrorist groups.[2] Together, these developments led to high numbers of VEOs in prisons worldwide, including in Europe.[3] The majority of VEOs will eventually be released and with that in mind, numerous countries are developing and implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programs to prevent recidivism and safeguard long-term security. Program evaluations and internationally agreed upon good policy documents (such as the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders and the UN Security Council Resolution 2178)[4] emphasise the importance of an individual approach. But what should such an individual approach to rehabilitation look like?

In the academic literature on prisons and terrorism, prisons are often viewed as so called 'hotbeds of radicalisation'.[5] Paradoxically, violent extremists are kept behind bars for the sake of public security; however, prisons can turn out to be the place where radicalisation takes place.[6] Mehdi Nemmouche,[7] the perpetrator of the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in 2014 and Amedy Coulibaly,[8] who murdered a police-officer and four visitors of a Jewish supermarket in Paris in 2015, were both radicalised in prison. Academic research shows that many European foreign fighters have been imprisoned before joining violent extremist groups.[9]

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[1] Europol, *The European Terrorism and Situation Trend Report* (The Hague: Europol, 2018). See also: GLOBSEC, *Who Are the European Jihadis? From Criminals to Terrorists and Back?*, Midterm Report (Bratislava: GLOBSEC, 2018), https://www.globsec.org/publications/who-are-european-jihadis-from-criminals-to-terrorists-and-back/.

[2] Liesbeth J. van der Heide and Jip Geenen, "Preventing Terrorism in the Courtroom – The Criminalisation of Preparatory Acts of Terrorism in the Netherlands," *Security and Human Rights* 26, no. 2-4 (2015): pp. 162-92, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02602016.

[3] I.e. in France, roughly 500 individuals are believed to be incarcerated for terrorism-related offenses with an additional 1200 inmates that are believed to be radicalized. Marc Hecker, "Jihadist Prisoners: The Fear of Recidivism," *Real Clear World,* 12 July 2018, https://www.ifri.org/en/espace-media/lifri-medias/jihadist-prisoners-fear-recidivism.

[4] Global Counterterrorism Forum, *Initiative to Address the Life Cycle of Radicalisation to Violence - Addendum to the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders* (The Hague: Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2018), https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Toolkit-documents/English-Addendum-to-the-Rome-Memorandum-on-Legal-Frameworks.pdf.

[5] Andrew Silke and Tinka Veldhuis, "Countering Violent Extremism in Prisons: A Review of Key Recent Research and Critical Research Gaps," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no.5 (2017): pp. 2-11.

[6] Arie W. Kruglanski, Michele J. Gelfand, Anna Sheveland, Maxim Babush, Malkanthi Hetiarachchi, Michele Ng Bonto, and Rohan Gunaratna, "What a Difference Two Years Make: Patterns of Radicalisation in a Philippine Jail," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways toward Terrorism and Genocide* 9, no. 1-3 (2016): pp. 13-36.

[7] "Amedy Coulibaly," Counter Extremism Project, accessed 14 March 2019, www.counterextremism.com/extremists/amedy-coulibaly.

[8] "Mehdi Nemmouche," Counter Extremism Project, accessed 14 March 2019, www.counterextremism.com/extremists/mehdi-nemmouche.

[9] Fabienne Thijs, Elanie Rodermond, and Frank Weerman, Verdachten van Terrorisme in Beeld (The Hague: Sdu, 2018); Thomas Renard and Rick Coolsaet, *Returnees: Who are They, Why are They (not)*

The challenge faced by practitioners working in custodial or probationary settings is to determine or to be informed of the risk posed by (suspected) violent extremists. This requires the implementation of proper risk assessment tools. Risk assessment is the process of identifying risks to and from an activity, event, individual, or organisation.[10] The outcome should provide an estimation of the likelihood of an adverse situation occurring.[11]. Violent extremist offenders demonstrate different risk indicators compared to ordinary violent offenders. Thus, the mere use of risk assessment approaches for regular crimes can blur important distinctions.[12] To assess whether or not someone will engage in extremist violence, specific indicators that are relevant to violent extremism need to be included.[13] Risk assessment is the process of identifying risks to and from an activity, event, individual, or organisation [14] and the outcome should provide an estimation of the likelihood of an adverse situation occurring. [15] Individual risk assessments for violent extremist offenders (VEOs) aim to identify the how risks, motivations, criminogenic needs, responsivities, vulnerabilities, and protective factors interact at a given point in time and within a given context.[16] The context depends on where the individual under assessment is in his or her trajectory vis-à-vis terrorism. This can vary from the idea that someone starts is in the process of adopting a violent ideology to searching for evidence that someone is about to commit a terrorist attack. The assessment is generally based on the nature of the extremist ideology, the justification of the use of violence to achieve desired goals, intentions to engage in such violence, and the capacity of the individual to plan and act at a given time (i.e. the extent to which they are embedded in a network and have access to resources).[17]

Over the years, a wide range of tools has been developed with the aim of assessing whether someone will engage in violent extremism. Such instruments are implemented either in pre-trial, detention, or post-detention settings.[18] In July 2018, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)'s Prison and Probation Working Group published a first overview of risk assessment instruments used in the prison and probation context, including guidelines on the use and implementation of these specific tools.[19] The paper

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Coming Back and How Should We Deal with Them? Assessing Policies on Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, (Brussels: Egmont, 2018). http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2018/02/egmont.papers.101_online_v1-3.pdf?type=pdf.

[10] Karl Roberts and John Horgan, "Risk Assessment and the Terrorist," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2, no.6 (2010) http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/38/html.

[11] Victoria Herrington and Karl Roberts, "Risk Assessment in Counterterrorism." in *Countering Terrorism: Psychosocial Strategies*, eds. Updesh Kumar and Manas (London: Sage, 2012), pp. 282–305.

[12] J. Maghan and R.J. Kelly, "Terrorism and Corrections. The Incarcerated Radical," in *International Terrorism: The Decade Ahead,* ed. Jane Rae Buckwalter (Chicago, Il: University of Illinois Press, Office of Criminal Justice, 1989), 29-53.; Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism," pp. 167-202.

[13] John Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism," *Psychology, Public Policy and Law* 18, no.2 (2012): pp. 167-202.; Randy Borum, "Assessing Risks for Terrorism Involvement," *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 2, no. 2 (2015): pp. 63-87.

[14] Karl Roberts and John Horgan, "Risk Assessment and the Terrorist," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2, no.6 (2010), http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/38/html.

[15] Victoria Herrington and Karl Roberts. "Risk Assessment in Counterterrorism." in *Countering Terrorism: Psychosocial Strategies*, eds. Updesh Kumar and Manas (London: Sage, 2012), pp. 282–305.

[16] Monica Lloyd, *Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory (Lancaster: Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, 2019).*

[17] Pressman, Elaine D, "Risk Assessment Decisions for Violent Political Extremism," *Public Safety Canada,* February 2009, https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/index-en.aspx; Lloyd, *Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory.*

[18] Such as the RADAR, the VAF and the SQAT; see also John Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism: Recent Developments," in *The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism*, eds. Gary LaFree and Joshua D. Freilich (New York: Wiley, 2017): pp. 520-34.

[19] Simon Cornwall and Merel Molenkamp, "Developing, Implementing and Using Risk Assessment for Violent Extremist and Terrorist Offenders," *Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)*, RAN Ex Post Paper, 9-10 July 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-

provides information on three main risk assessment methodologies (the ERG22+, the VERA-2R and the RRAP). The overview provided by RAN is generally descriptive in nature whereas the present study offers a more comparative framework. Furthermore, this paper expands the overview provided by RAN by with four other risk assessment tools for violent extremist offenders: the Significance Quest Assessment Test (SQAT), the RADAR, the IR46 and the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF). More recently, Monica Lloyd (2019) published a comparison between risk assessment tools for violent extremism.[20] However, Lloyd exclusively based her study on input by the developers of the tools, whereas the underlying study is focused on the practitioner level and the use of the tool in different professional contexts. Additionally, this paper contextualises these instruments through a literature review on *What is risk assessment?*, *What are the main approaches used in risk assessment?*, and *What sets violent extremism apart from other forms of criminal behaviour?* Next, the seven risk assessment approaches will be compared along the following lines:

a. What is the purpose of the tool;
b. In what context (country, institutional environment) was the tool developed;
c. For what audience has the tool been developed; and
d. Which indicators are included?

By providing a more comprehensive and comparative overview of some of the main risk assessment approaches to violent extremism, this paper can be used as a foundation for practitioners and policymakers faced with the question of what assessing the risk of VEOs entails.

Literature Review

According to Herrington and Roberts, the term *risk assessment "refers to any process involving the systematic gathering and interpretation of information pertaining to an individual in order to predict the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behaviour of concern in the future."*[21] For a long time, risk assessment has been used in the mental health care sector by clinical and forensic psychologists to predict the likelihood that violent offenders will reoffend. [22] Researchers and practitioners distinguish several methods that can be employed in individual (violence) risk assessments—the four main approaches (unstructured clinical judgment, the actuarial method, structured professional judgment (SPJ), and self-assessment) are discussed below.

The realisation that motivations, objectives, and methods of violent extremists differ from those individuals committing 'ordinary' violent acts is of recent nature.[23] Borum (2015) argues that SPJ tools for violence in general assume a cumulative risk model, implying that the more risk factors are present, the higher the chance of engaging in violence. This assumption however is not supported by the literature on individuals

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do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-p-and-
p/docs/ran_pp_developing_implementing_using_risk_assessment_brussels_09-10_07_2018_en.pdf.

[20] Lloyd, *Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory.*

[21] Herrington and Roberts, "Risk assessments in counterterrorism," pp. 282-305.

[22] Joanne Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes," *International Peacekeeping* 25, no. 3 (2018): pp. 373-93, DOI:10.1080/13533312.2018.1440177.

[23] Tore Bjørgo, "Dreams and Disillusionment: Engagement in and Disengagement from Militant Extremist Groups," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 55, no.4 (2011): pp. 277-85.; Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism," pp. 167-205.

engaging in extremist violence. Pressman et al (who developed an SPJ tool) emphasise that one of the specifics of violent extremism is that sometimes just a few risk indicators that are present can lead to an overall high risk.[24] If someone is highly committed to an extremist ideology, has assigned a target for an extremist attack, and has already obtained weapons to commit the attack, all other indicators may be considered irrelevant. According to Borum[25] *"an individual's risk for being involved (or re-engaging) in terrorism cannot be answered with any existing statistical formula or with a simple tally of possible risk factors. What we know of terrorism involvement suggests that it has many possible path ways."* Another challenge is posed by Lloyd (2019), who writes that past violent behaviour does not have to be a precursor for violent extremism, even though it often serves as a predictor for 'ordinary' violence.[26] This results in a diminished information position and accordingly makes the assessment of violent extremism "a more difficult one."[27] All in all, the study of risk assessment for violent extremism is "still in its infancy."[28] Researchers in the field are focusing their attention on developing and implementing risk assessment tools specifically designed to assess the risk of violent extremism. This requires understanding of the several methods that can be employed in individual (violence) risk assessments.

Unstructured Clinical Judgment

One method is an unaided approach to determine the estimation of risk.[29] This method may be referred to as a clinical approach and includes unstructured or semi-structured approaches. Essentially, the clinician makes the judgment/decision based on experience, knowledge and expertise.[30] An example of risk assessment tools using unstructured clinical judgment is the HKT-R, an instrument developed to assess the risk for violent recidivism with leave applications using a semi-structured approach.[31] Traditionally carried out by a clinician, i.e. a professional with appropriate training and expertise, such decision-making is frequently described as informal, impressionistic, and subjective.[32] Clinical or unstructured approaches do not provide sufficient reliability and validity in the risk assessments nor do they allow for reliable repeated measures, since several clinicians could reach different decisions about the same individual.[33] Furthermore, this approach is more likely to miss important indicators. It is also vulnerable to a range of biases (e.g. confirmation bias), because of its dependency on professional discretion.

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24 Pressman, Elaine, Nils Duits, Thomas Rinne, and John Flockton, "VERA-2R A Structured Professional Judgement Approach," *European Commission,* 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/node/11702_en.
25 Borum, "Assessing risk for terrorism involvement," 79.
26 Lloyd, *Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory.*
27 Ibid.
28 Andrew Silke, "Risk assessment of terrorist and extremist prisoners," in *Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management*, ed. Andrew Silke, (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 108-21.
29 Stephen D. Hart and Caroline Logan, "Formulation of Violence Risk Using Evidence-Based Assessments: The Structured Professional Judgment Approach" in *Forensic Case Formulation*, eds. Peter Sturmey and Mary McMurran, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2011). DOI: 10.1002/9781119977018.
30 Stephen D. Hart, Christine Michie, and David J. Cooke, "Precision of Actuarial Risk Assessment Instruments," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 190, no.49 (May 2007): pp. 60-5.
31 Marinus Spreen et al., *Handleiding en Methodologische Verantwoording. HKT-R Historische, Klinische en Toekomstige – Revisie* (Groningen: Stichting FPC Dr. S. van Mesdag, 2014), p. 7.
32 William M. Grove and Paul E. Meehl, "Comparative Efficiency of Informal (Subjective, Impressionistic) and Formal (Mechanical, Algorithmic) Prediction Procedures: The Clinical-Statistical Controversy," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 2 (1996): pp. 293-323.
33 Thomas R. Litwack, "Actuarial Versus Clinical Assessments of Dangerousness," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 7, no.2 (2001): pp. 409-43, DOI: 10.1037//1076-8971.7.2.409.

Actuarial Approach

A second method is the actuarial approach, derived largely from the insurance industry where statistics are closely monitored in order to price policies such that those most at risk pay more than those least at risk.[34] Actuarial assessments involve obtaining the answers to a set, specified number of questions (e.g. number of previous convictions).[35] Some actuarial assessment can be completed from file information only (e.g. age at first conviction), while some require greater interaction, and understanding about an offender (his or her attitudes to crime, for example).

To complete the actuarial assessment, the answers to each, and every question (or risk indicator) are 'scored' followed by the establishment of a total score (and sometimes sub-totals). These tools are therefore formal, algorithmic, and objective.[36] These assessments tend to be more reliable than clinical judgment because, in theory, if several practitioners use the same actuarial tool on the same offender, they should reach a similar conclusion.[37] These approaches, however, use rigid and limited risk indicators that are not appropriate for all types of individual risk assessment.[38] The heterogeneity of the motivations and forms of violent extremism, the limited amount of empirical (primary source) data available, and the complex integration of risk indicators with potential psychopathology that may lead to violent extremism make the actuarial method les suitable for this specific type of offender population[39] The actuarial approach has also been criticised for being too strict, lacking sensitivity for change.[40] Furthermore, they are criticised for failing to support risk management and, in consequence, preventing violence.[41]

Structured Professional Judgment

A third method can be seen as the combination of a structured systematic evaluative protocol with professional judgment: the Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) approach. In this approach, decisions are based on guidelines, structured questions, or lists of criteria that must be considered. These indicators are developed from the existing empirical knowledge base (often through literature reviews) and from professional practice.[42] This approach can be seen as an attempt to close the gap between actuarial

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[34] David H. Morgan and Stan Ruszczynsky, eds., *Lectures on Violence, Perversion, and Delinquency*, (London: Karnac Books, 2007). ISBN: 9781855754959.61.

[35] Stephen D. Hart, "The Role of Psychopathy in Assessing Risk for Violence: Conceptual and Methodological Issues," *Legal and Criminological Psychology* 3 (1998): pp. 121-37.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Robyn M. Dawes, David Faust, and Paul E. Meehl, "Clinical Versus Actuarial Judgment," *Science* 243 (1989): pp. 1668-74.

[38] Michele Buurman et al., *Research and Practice in Risk Assessment and Risk Management of Children and Young People Engaging in Offending Behaviours: A Literature Review*, (Paisley: Risk Management Authority Research, 2007).

[39] Monahan, "The Individual Risk Assessment of Terrorism," pp. 167-205; Kiran Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalisation from Nonviolence into Terrorism," *American Psychologist* 72, no.3 (2017): pp. 278-88.

[40] Kirk Heilbrun, "Prediction versus Management Models Relevant to Risk Assessment: The Importance of Legal Decision-Making Context," *Law and Human Behavior* 21, (1997): pp. 347-59.

[41] Kevin S. Douglas, James R.P. Ogloff, and Stephen D. Hart, "Evaluation of a Model of Violence Risk Assessment Among Forensic Psychiatric Patients," *Psychiatric Services* 54, no. 10, (2003): pp. 1372-79. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.54.10.1372; see also: Charles L. Scott and Phillip Resnick, "Violence Risk Assessment in Persons with Mental Illness," *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 11, no.6 (2006): pp. 598-611.

[42] Randy K. Otto and Kevin S. Douglas, eds., *Handbook of Violence Risk Assessment Tools* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2011).

and unstructured clinical approaches.[43] The term has also been described as the "guided clinical approach".[44]

SPJ is a relatively new approach to assessing risk of violence, but has rapidly become the method of choice due to its demonstrated reliability and validity (see for instance the Historical Clinical Risk Management-20 (HCR-20), probably the most well-researched and widely used SPJ tool).[45] Whilst it is capable of assessing the likelihood of future violence through identifying salient risk factors with similar (moderate) degrees of accuracy as actuarially-based schemes, SPJ has the distinct advantage that it also provides guidance for managing or reducing the identified risk(s)—aiming to prevent violence.[46] Risk assessment tools based on this approach always contain a clear link between the identified risk factors and the proposed risk management strategies.

There are many advantages to the SPJ approach: it includes both static and dynamic risk factors with a strong empirical bases; it is structured but retains a role for professional judgment and provides flexibility and individualisation in its application; and there is a clear link between risk factors and risk management strategies.[47] Due to the heterogeneity of the target population, the potential relevance of historic information and the specific risks related to terrorism (e.g. ideology), it will come as no surprise that experts consider SPJ as the most appropriate method for risk assessment of terrorists and violent extremists. However, there is also a clear disadvantage: SPJ assessments are time—and resource—intensive and require a reasonable understanding of risk assessment and violence literature as well as appropriate training to assure a proper understanding of all aspects of the specific tool.[48][49]

Quantifying Information: Self-Reporting

Furthermore, self-report questionnaires can prove useful in quantifying information pertaining to attitudes, motivational elements, commitments to ideologies justifying violence, and grievances. Such elements are known to be related to violent political extremism. Self-rating of motivational elements, ideology, and social support can provide important insight into the psychological drivers and contextual influences of violent extremism unique to the individual. Since research has shown that specific attitudes have been associated with vulnerability for radicalisation recruitment,[50][51] such

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[43] Kevin S. Douglas and P. Randall Kropp, "A Prevention-Based Paradigm for Violence Risk Assessment: Clinical and Research Applications," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 29, no. 5 (2002): pp. 617-58, DOI: 10.1177/009385402236735.

[44] Karl Hanson, "What do we know about sex offender risk assessment?" *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 4(1998): p. 52

[45] Otto and Douglas, *Handbook of Violence Risk Assessment Tools*.

[46] Douglas and Kropp, " A Prevention-Based Paradigm for Violence Risk Assessment: Clinical and Research Applications," pp. 617-58.

[47] Laura S. Guy, Ira K. Packer, and William Warnken, "Assessing Risk of Violence Using Structured Professional Judgment Guidelines," *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice* 12, no.3 (2012): pp. 270-83. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15228932.2012.674471.

[48] Pressman, "Risk Assessment Decisions for Violent Political Extremism," p. 25, p. 31, https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/index-en.aspx.

[49] Caroline Logan, "Reporting Structured Professional Judgement," in *The Forensic Psychologist's Report Writing Guide*, eds. Sarah Brown, Erica Bowen, and David Prescott (London: Routledge, 2017),pp. 82-93.

[50] Alex P. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review," *ICCT Research Paper* (March 2013), https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf.

[51] Chris Angus, "Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses," *NSW Parliamentary Research Service* 1, (February 2016): pp. 5-13,

self-report information is valuable in an analysis of individual risk. As such, the availability of self-report information can enhance the background information available for risk assessment.

Specifically, self-report questionnaires can be subject to biases of social desirability wherein the respondents report what they feel would serve their interests.[52] Such bias is avoided in the SPJ approach, which is not based solely on for example individual's own impressions. A different bias may exist in the observational approach. In cases where the assessors are also the agents implementing rehabilitation, there may be a tendency to be less than objective about rehabilitation success.[53] That bias is avoided in the SQ self-report approach. Jointly, the two approaches in the battery methodologically complement each other by controlling for biases that are inherent in each approach individually.[54] Examples of risk assessment tools using self-questionnaires are: Measure of Criminal Attitudes and Associates,[55] and the Self-Appraisal Questionnaire (SAQ).[56] These are all tools developed to assess the risk for violence. Only the validity of these tools has been proven.[57] However, the validity of self-reporting risk assessment tools for violent extremism has not extensively been researched yet.

Methods

Risk assessment means different things to different people. The type of risk that is measured is not just dependent on the context within which a risk assessment tool is used but often, 'risk' is not explicitly operationalised in the introduction to or guidelines accompanying risk assessment tools. Where in correctional settings risk might refer to the risk of escape or the risk of radicalising others, outside of the prison context risk can also refer to the risk that an individual will use violence or the risk that they might be socialised into an extremist network. And some assessments focus on the current risk, posed by an individual here and now whereas other tools are concerned with the potential future risk of an individual.[58] In all these cases, risk refers to something different and in some cases it refers to a behaviour whereas in others it refers to a mental state. However, as all risk assessment tools are based on the idea that the indicators presented can inform the user about a process of radicalisation as a psychological construct, the indicators are believed to be features of this process.[59]

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https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/radicalisation-and-violent-extremism-causes-and-/Radicalisation%20eBrief.pdf.

[52] Thomas Holtgraves, "Social Desirability and Self-Reports: Testing Models of Socially Desirable Responding," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30, no. 2 (2004): pp. 161-72, https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203259930.

[53] Daryl G. Kroner and Wagdy Loza, "Evidence for the Efficacy of Self-Report in Predicting Nonviolent and Violent Criminal Recidivism," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 16, no2. (2001): pp. 168-77.

[54] Rodger Tarling, *Analysing Offending: Data, Models and Interpretation* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1993).

[55] Jeremy F. Mills, Daryl G. Kroner, and Adelle E. Forth, "Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA) Development, Factor Structure, Reliability, and Validity," *Assessment* 9, no.3 (2002): pp. 240-53, https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191102009003003.

[56] Wagdy Loza, *The Self-Appraisal Questionnaire (SAQ): A Tool for Assessing Violent and Non-violent Recidivism* (Toronto: Mental Health Systems, 2005).

[57] Wagdy Loza et al., "Cross-Validation of the Self-Appraisal Questionnaire (SAQ)," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 19, no.10 (2004): pp. 1172-90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260504269180.

[58] Kiran M. Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalisation from Nonviolence into Terrorism," *American Psychologist 72*, no. 3, (2017): pp. 278-88.

[59] Akimi Scarcella, Ruairi Page, and Vivek Furtado, "Terrorism, Radicalisation, Extremism, Authoritarianism and Fundamentalism: A Systematic Review of the Quality and Psychometric Properties of Assessments," *PLoS ONE* 11, no. 12 (2016): e0166947, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0166947.

To draft a list of all available risk assessment tools for violent extremism, a three-step approach was adopted. First, a list was compiled of all risk assessment tools already known to the authors, including the risks assessment tools described in the RAN paper on risk assessment instruments used in the prison and probation context. Second, a systematic literature review was conducted based on a Google Scholar database search on risk assessment tools that have been developed with the aim of assessing the level of radicalisation towards violent extremism—for uses either in pre-trial, detention, or post settings. The search was based on the following terms: risk assessment AND terrorism, risk assessment tools AND (violent) extremism, risk assessment tools AND radicalisation. In the third step, through snowballing, the current literature was used as a starting point to identify additional risk assessment tools for violent extremism. Through using the bibliography of these studies we were able to find additional tools and literature on these tools.

The result of this approach was the identification of 15 risk assessment tools for violent extremism. In this paper, a comparative overview is provided of seven widely used instruments that are included based on certain criteria, which are outlined in the next section. After an introduction to the instruments an overview is provided in Table 1, including the background and the structure of the tools. This schematic overview is followed by a more in-depth assessment of all tools. For each risk assessment method, we (1) provide background information including the field of expertise/discipline within which they were created, the underlying methodology and the various ways in which these tools are structured; (2) describe the purpose of the risk assessment tools and their respective target audience(s); and (3) elaborate on the use (practical implications) of the tools.

Selection Criteria

Three inclusion criteria were used to select risk assessment tools for the analysis in this paper:

1. Risk assessment tools[60] that are especially designed to assess the risk of violent extremism, or tools that are used to assess the level of radicalisation of an individual;
2. Risk assessment tools that contain a number of indicators to determine the risk level for violent extremism or the extent of radicalisation of an individual;
3. Risk assessment tools that were developed, or have received an update, from 2010 onwards.

Based on the criteria above, seven risk assessment tools were selected and analysed. Eight tools were excluded because they did not meet the selection criteria or there was a lack of access to the relevant information to analyse the tool. These include the *Quick Scan Radicalisering (Quick Scan Radicalisation – QSR)* because it provides an overview of knowledge about radicalisation amongst professionals, rather than providing guidelines in the form of indicators for assessing risk for violent extremism.[61] Another tool that was not included due to lack of information is the Risk Assessment for Violent Extremists

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[60] Tool is defined here as a framework that assists professionals in determining the risk of the violent extremist offender on the individual level;

[61] Gert van den Berg et al., "Quick Scan Radicalisering, Verkenning van de Lokale Praktijk", *Nederlands Jeugdinstituut Movisie,* July 2016. https://www.nji.nl/nl/Download-NJi/Publicatie-NJi/Quickscan-Radicalisering.pdf.

(RAVE), a tool developed by Geoff Dean.[62] The tool is based on a neurocognitive learning model of the radicalisation process and consists of two elements: (1) a checklist of 31 "cognitive" risk indicators and (2) a software program, which visualises the scored factors.[63] The Radicalisation Assessment Monitor (RAM)[64] was excluded because it consists of a quick scan of symptoms rather than a set of indicators. The RAM assesses risk factors and protective factors to determine the level of radicalisation of an individual.[65] The outcome of the tool is twofold: it assists the practitioner in his or her assessment of the level of risk and it provides information about the decision if, when and how to contact third parties.[66] The developers of the RAM also aim to contribute to a common language for discussing topics associated with radicalisation and ideology.[67] The Radicx tool was also excluded because it is a set of guidelines rather than indicators, developed in the Netherlands for teachers and school staff to recognise signs of radicalisation at an early stage and distinguish it from other phenomena, such as teenage angst, mental disorders and drug or alcohol problems.[68] The tool consists of six steps, which should be discussed with a group of people who are close to the person that is subject to the risk assessment.[69] The Guidance for Identifying Vulnerable People (IVP) was excluded because it describes risk behaviour but does not provide a risk assessment methodology as such.[70] Another tool that was not included in this study is the Classification of Violence Risk (COVR), because it is aimed at hospitalised persons with mental disorders rather than violent extremists specifically.[71] The Multi-Level Guidelines (MLG) was not included because it is not focused on an individual but instead, it assesses group-based violence.[72] Finally, the Terrorist Radicalisation Assessment Protocol-18 (TRAP-18) was not included in this study, as the developers have identified the tool as an investigative template rather than an assessment tool because it not well enough tested yet.[73] Table 1 provides an overview of the seven included tools.

As discussed in the introduction to the methods used, risk is perceived in different ways by the authors of the tools. Considering the tools reviewed for this overview, a general

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[62] Geoff Dean and Graeme Pettet, "The 3 R's of Risk Assessment for Violent Extremism," *Journal of Forensic Practice* 19, no.2 (2017): pp. 91-101.

[63] Geoff Dean, "What are the Tools for a NeuroCognitive Risk Assessment? Violence Prevention Consulting," *Violence Prevention Consulting,* 2014, http://geoffdean.com.au/what-are-the-tools-for-a-neurocognitive-risk-assessment/.

[64] Mental Healthcare Organisation in The Netherlands

[65] Christophe Paulussen, Janne Nijman, and Karlien Lismont, "Mental Health and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon: A Case Study from the Netherlands," *ICCT Report* (2017), https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ICCT-Paulussen-Nijman-Lismont-Mental-Health-and-the-Foreign-Fighter-Phenomenon-March-2017-1.pdf.

[66] Wilfried D. J. Ekkers, Roland van de Sande and J. Levy, *Radicalisation Assessment in Mental Health Care (RAM),* (The Hague: Parnassia Groep, 2017).

[67] Paulussen, Nijman, and Lismont., "Mental health and the foreign fighter phenomenon: A case study from the Netherlands."

[68] Anniek Verhagen, Maartje Reitsma, and Ine Spee, *Vroegtijdige Signalering van Radicalisering*, ('s-Hertogenbosch: KPC Groep and APS, 2010).

[69] Ine Spee and Maartje Reitsma, *Puberaal, Lastig of Radicaliserend?* ('s-Hertogenbosch: KPC Groep, 2010).

[70] Jon Cole et al., *Guidance for Identifying People Vulnerable to Recruitment in Violent Extremism* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2010), http://www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk/uploads/editor/files/IVP_Guidance_Draft_v0.3_web_version.pdf.

[71] John Monahan et al., "The Classification of Violence Risk," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 24, no.6 (2006): pp. 721-30, http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/bsl.725.

[72] Alana Nicole Cook, *Risk Assessment and Management of Group-Based Violence* (British Columbia: Simon Fraser University Diss. Arts & Social Sciences: Department of Psychology, 2014), pp. 19-22, https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0166947.

[73] J. Reid Meloy, and Paul Gill, "The Lone-Actor Terrorist and the TRAP-18," *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 3, no.1 (2016): pp. 37-52.

distinction can be made with on the one hand instruments that focus on the risk of an increased willingness to contribute to violent extremism (such as the VERA-2R). The SQAT has a similar goal in that it the underlying model proposes that 'radicalisation reflects a high-level commitment to the ideologically suggested goal (e.g., liberating one's land from occupation), and to violence as a means to its attainment, coupled with a reduced commitment to alternative goals and values'.[74] Other instruments that seek to provide an indication of the *level* or *degree* of radicalisation (including the R-Rap, IR46 and the Radar). Given that radicalisation is known to be a complex process that is influenced by a myriad of factors on the personal, the group and the structural level, risk does not equal radicalisation nor does radicalisation equal violent extremism.

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[74] Michelle Dugas and Arie W. Kruglanski, "The Quest for Significance Model of Radicalisation: Implications for the Management of Terrorist Detainees," *Behavioral Sciences & The Law* 32, no. 3 (2014): pp. 423-39.

	VERA-2R	ERG 22+	SQAT	IR 46	RRAP	Radar	VAF
Full name	Violent Extremism Risk Assessment, Version 2 Revised	Extremism Risk Guidance	Significance Quest Assessment Test	Islamic Radicalisation Model	Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prison	Radar	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
Country of Origin	Canada & The Netherlands	United Kingdom	United States	Netherlands	Portugal	Australia	United Kingdom
Developer(s)	D.E. Pressman, N. Duits, T. Rinne, & J. Flockton	M. Lloyd & C. Dean	A. W. Kruglanski	Dutch Police	P. das Neves	K.Barelle & S. Harris-Hogan	NOMS/ Channel
Organisation	Netherlands Institute for Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology	National Offender Management Service	-	Dutch Police	R2PRIS	-	Channel Programme
Background developers	Academia and Forensic mental health experts	Police and Justice Institutions	Social Psychology	Police	Police and Justice Institutions	Academia	Police and Justice Institutions
Approach	SPJ	SPJ	Self-questionnaire	SPJ	SPJ	SPJ	SPJ
Basis / sources for tool development	Literature	Literature + cases	Literature + expert input	Academia + case studies	Literature	Academia, forensic mental health experts, and police counter-terrorism practitioners	Literature + cases
Structure of the tool							
Number of indicators	45	22	66	46	-	27	22
Categories/ dimensions/ sections	8	3	3	2	3	5	3
Type of categories	Beliefs & Attitude; Social Context; History & Capacity; Motivators; Risk mitigating indicators. Additional domains: Personal history; Criminal history; Psychopathology	Engagement, Intent, Capability	Needs, Narrative, Network	Social context, ideological factors	Behavioral, emotional, cognitive dimensions	Social Relations, Coping, Identity, Ideology, Action Orientation	Engagement, Intent, Capability

Table 1. Overview background and structure of tools

Findings

Background

This paragraph provides a short description of the country of origin, the field of expertise/discipline within which they were created, the authors, the underlying methodology (theory or case-based), and the structure (indicators) of the tools. The tools will also be categorised into (1) risk assessment tools with a focus on known terrorist offenders and (2) risk assessment tools with a focus on the early identification or screening of potential violent extremist offenders. The selected risk assessment tools were developed in six different countries: The United Kingdom (UK); the Netherlands; Portugal; the United States (US); Canada; and Australia. However, some of the tools are implemented or have been used in several countries.[75]

In 2009, the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA), developed by Dr. Elaine Pressman, was published. The VERA was the first risk assessment tool specifically developed for violent extremism.[76] The VERA arose from the increasing need to assess the danger and risk posed by ideologically motivated violent individuals.[77] It is based on the existing empirical knowledge of violent extremists and terrorists. In 2012, the VERA2 was developed, which is a modified version based on user feedback. The current VERA-2R is an updated version of the VERA-2, including additional motivational indicators that have been identified as relevant to the radicalisation to violence process: status, fear, and a search for significance. The VERA-2R also includes additional indicators related to non-violent criminal history, personal history, and mental disorders. These additional indicators have been identified as potential aggravating factors that may support radicalisation to violence and terrorism actions.[78] The VERA-2R is based upon academic research until 2018, and in the user manual extensive explanations based on the literature are provided for each indicator.

The VERA-2R has an overlap in indicators with the Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG22+), developed by M. Lloyd & C. Dean. Both Lloyd and Dean were (at the time of development) practicing forensic psychologists within the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) of England and Wales. Both tools adopt a SPJ approach and focus on protective factors and risk factors.[79] During the development of the first

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75 The VERA2 has been used in Nigeria in the de-radicalisation process of prisoners in Nigeria. For more information see: Atta Bryans Barkindo, "De-Radicalising Prisoners in Nigeria: Developing a Basic Prison based De-Radicalisation Programme," *Journal for deradicalisation,* no. 7 (Summer 2016), ISSN: 2363-9849. The SQAT was used with detained individuals suspected of membership in the Abu Sayaaf organizations in the Philippines, as well as with Muslim community samples in Spain, Morocco, and the West Bank. For more information see: "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," *ICCT* [non communicable].

76 Dean, "The 3 R's of Risk Assessment for Violent Extremism," pp. 91-101.

77 "RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism," *Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN),* 2016, https://www.ifv.nl/kennisplein/Documents/2016-RAN-Preventing-Radicalisation-to-Terrorism-and-Violent-Extremism.pdf .

78 Among others, Paul Gill and Emily Corner, "There and Back Again. The Study of Mental Disorder and Terrorist Involvement," *American Psychologist* 72, no.3 (2017): pp. 231-41.; Norah Schulten et al., *Radicalisation, Terrorism & Psychopathology: State of Affairs, Gaps and Priorities for Future Research* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2019), https://english.wodc.nl/binaries/2911_Summary_tcm29-373042.pdf.

79 Monica Lloyd and Christopher Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 2, no.1 (2015): p. 40.

version of the ERG22+, the developer of VERA consulted the developers of the ERG22+ to see whether they could collaborate and work on a single framework.[80] However, as the goals and purposes of the tools differed too much, they decided not to cooperate on one single framework but rather, to focus on the development of their own tools. In contrast to VERA-2R, the ERG22+ is based on casework rather than academic literature. The first ERG22+ was based on input from 20 cases of convicted extremist offenders in the UK. Ultimately, 21 risk indicators were identified from these cases. Based on feedback from users and additional casework knowledge, the ERG22+ was further developed, resulting in a tool that consists of 22 risk indicators divided under three dimensions. The "+" suffix in the title of ERG22+ should accommodate any other factor(s) that appear(s) relevant to the assessor.[81]

Another tool that is also specially designed for use in prison and probation setting is the Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons (RRAP) Tools Set, developed by R2PRIS. The R2PRIS Radicalisation Prevention in Prisons is a 3-year project, which started in 2015 and is supported by the European Commission. The project is coordinated by BSAFE LAB Law Enforcement, Justice and Public Safety lab[82] within the University of Beira Interior in Portugal, together with Innovative Prisons Systems (IPS).[83] The project team of R2PRIS developed among others the RRAP tool, which comprises three risk assessment instruments: Helicopter view, Frontline Behavioural Observation Guidelines (FBOG) and Individual Radicalisation Screening (IRS), and one readiness assessment tool (Critical Incidents Readiness Assessment (CIRA). The RRAP focuses on signalling risk and vulnerability in the general prison population instead of already charged or convicted terrorist offenders.[84] Several sources of information can be used to use the tool (i.e. interviews with the inmate and observation reports). The tool consists of 39 items in 9 dimensions (emotional uncertainty, self-esteem, radicalism, distance, and societal disconnection, need to belong, legitimisation of terrorism, perceived in-group superiority, identity fusion, and identification, and activism). For each dimension, the "severity" must be indicated using a scale (from one to five), which indicates low, moderate, or high vulnerability. Finally, the assessment of the risk level will be judged by a decision maker, who decides on the category of risk or the need for intervention.[85]

Another tool that focuses on the prevention of violent radicalisation is the Islamic Radicalisation model 46 (IR46), which was developed by the Dutch Police in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Justice and Safety, and academics in the field of terrorism studies. IR46 is a risk assessment tool that helps police, the intelligence services and so called 'care-providers' (organisations that are in close contact with specific persons that are subject to concerns about radicalisation or extremism) to recognise signals of Islamic radicalisation at an early stage. The IR46 is developed on the basis an international literature review, interviews with experts, and case studies and is updated every three years. The IR-46 is the new name and successor of a preceding instrument named *Kennis in Modellen (Knowledge in Models)* (KIM), dating back to

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[80] Pressman, "Risk assessment decisions"; see also D. Elaine Pressman, and John Flockton, "Calibrating Risk for Violent Political Extremists and Terrorists: The VERA 2 Structured Assessment," *The British Journal of Forensic Practice* 14, no.4 (2012): pp. 237-51.

[81] Lloyd and Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p. 40.

[82] BSAFE LAB Law Enforcement, Justice and Public Safety lab is an open interdisciplinary research and technology transfer laboratory.

[83] R2PRIS, "Multi-level in-Prison Radicalisation Prevention – Certification Training".

[84] RAN, "Developing, Implementing and Using Risk Assessment."

[85] European Commission, *Conference on Radicalisation in Prisons. Event Report European Commission* (Brussels: European Commission, 2018); See also: RAN, "Developing, Implementing and Using Risk Assessment for Violent Extremist and Terrorist Offenders."

KIM1.0 in 2009.[86] The IR46 was introduced in 2016, adopts an SPJ approach and consists of four phases with indicators related to ideology and the social context of an individual. In total, the IR46 consists of (not surprisingly) 46 indicators that are subdivided under nine groups. The IR46 leads to a so-called 'signaling'—or traffic light—model that prioritises local policies. Subsequently, a tailor-made approach is developed targeting regional individuals who are potentially radicalising. Additionally, the professional that uses the IR46 can add case-specific factors to the assessment as deemed appropriate. It is not required to exclusively rely on objective information. Information based on the gut-feeling of a policeman can be included in the tool.

The U.K. Government developed the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) that also adopts an SPJ approach.[87] The VAF is mainly used in local partnerships (i.e. staff in the education, local authorities, youth services, and health sector) that work with the Channel program[88]. The VAF is used *"to assess whether individuals need support to safeguard them from the risk of being targeted by terrorists and radicalisers"*.[89] The VAF consists of 22 factors - across three dimensions: engagement, intent and capability – *"that may cause an individual (a) to engage with a terrorist group, (b) to develop the intent to cause harm and (c) to develop the capability to cause harm"*. In contrast with some of the other tools, the VAF does not use a point scale, because scaling each factor can be highly subjective according to the creators of VAF. Therefore, assessors have to fill in all the information that is available for each factor without attaching a score to the indicator. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that the characteristics mentioned in the framework do necessarily indicate that an individual is engaged with a terrorist group or may become involved with a terrorist group. The framework can be used to complement professional judgment when practitioners need to make decisions.[90]

The Radar (developed and used in Australia) is a protocol designed to systematically document all aspects of a person and his or her environment. It functions as a basis to structure information to aid decision-making. The protocol consists of two assessments: an initial screening that determines whether an individual is potentially suitable to participate in a program, followed by (in case of a positive answer) an in-depth risk and needs assessment to determine whether an intervention is appropriate and to design a case management plan. Radar is used to identify specific individuals who would benefit from programs designed to reduce the risk or mitigate the impact of radicalisation, as opposed to trying to predict the likelihood of low base rate violent actions. The Radar is based on Kate Barrelle's pro-integration model [91] and assesses five areas of an individual's life: social relations, coping, identity, ideology, and criminal action orientation. The underlying idea to develop this risk assessment protocol was that the Australian police and social services felt a need for a context-specific tool based on Australian research. The Radar also explicitly focuses on behaviour rather than ideology or beliefs; all indicators relate to observable behavioural facts.

A risk assessment tool that is not based on an SPJ approach is the Significance Quest Assessment Test (SQAT), developed in the United States by professor Arie Kruglanski.

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[86] Lloyd, *Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory*, p. 19.

[87] Kiran, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalisation from Nonviolence into Terrorism."

[88] The Channel program is a program in the UK which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to radicalisation.

[89] "Channel Vulnerability Assessment," *HM Government,* 2012,
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-vulnerability-assessment.

[90] "Channel Vulnerability Assessment*."*

[91] Kate Barrelle, "Pro-integration: Disengagement from and Life after Extremism," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 7, no 2 (2015): pp. 129-42. The Pro-Integration Model emerged from the Global Terrorism Research Centre (GTRC) in 2009-2015 wich was completed by Monash University's.

The SQAT is a self-questionnaire and is designed to measure detainees' degree of radicalisation, or adherence to violent extremism.[92] The questionnaire consists of 66 items spread across three scales: 'needs'; 'narrative'; and 'network' (the 3N-approach). The individuals under assessment have to respond to these items by marking a Likert scale with appropriate labels that indicate the extent to which they agree with a statement, or their degree of endorsement of the statement. The point scale of SQAT is ranging from *rarely or never* (1) to *very often* (7). The scores for the questions are then translated into an overall risk level for an individual and provide insight on the level of risk posed by the given individual.

Purpose and Target Audience(S)

The target audiences of the VERA-2R differ per country as some countries use the tool to assess the risks for conditional release while other countries use the tool for pre-trial risk assessment. The VERA-2R can support analysis of future extremist violence and can be used to identify objectives for management of violent extremism.[93] The ERG22+ also focuses on individuals that are convicted for terrorism-related offenses. The purpose of the tool is for professionals to comment on offender risk and needs through an assessment their engagement to an extremist group, cause or ideology their intentions and their capabilities.[94] In contrast, the RRAP emphasises individuals in prisons who are vulnerable to radicalisation or shows signs of radicalisation and the purpose of the tool is to assess the level of vulnerability and risk of radicalisation.[95] The SQAT is also used within prisons and its purpose is to measure the risk posed by an inmate. Furthermore, the SQAT can also provide insight in the impact of deradicalisation programs (by re-assessing over time).[96] Regarding the IR46, VAF, and the Radar, they are not used or specifically designed to be used within prisons but focus on individuals in the general population who manifest signs of radicalisation. The IR46 focuses on individuals from 12 years and older.

Use and Practical Implications

In this paragraph, we will provide insight in (1) the objective of the tool; (2) the end-users of the tool and training requirements; (3) the institutional context within which the tool can be used; and (4) the type and level of information that is required for a valid assessment. Finally, the practical implications of using the tools will be discussed. An overview of the implementation aspects of the risk assessment tools is presented in Table 2 below.

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92 "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," *ICCT* [not publicly available].

93 Pressman et al., "VERA-2R: A Structured Professional Judgment Approach."

94 Lloyd, *Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory*, p.13.

95 R2PRIS, "Multi-level in-Prison Radicalisation Prevention – Certification Training."

96 "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," *ICCT*.

Use	VERA-2R	ERG 22+	SQAT	IR 46	RRAP	Radar	VAF
Objective	To obtain information on the likelihood of violent extremist action; to develop risk management strategies; to monitor risk trajectories; and to obbtain information for early release decisions	To inform proportionate risk management; increase understanding and confidence amongst front-line staff and decision-makers, and facilitate effective and targeted intervention	To enable professionals to measure the level of radicalization. And to measure the impact of deradicalization programs	To enable professionals within the safety field to early detect signs of Islamic radicalization	To enable prison staff to identify risk; and screen and assess inmates that may be at risk of becoming radicalized	To identify high-risk individuals who would benefit from programs designed to prevent radicalization	To determine whether individuals should be accepted into the Channel program
Target audience	Violent extremist offenders and radicalized individuals	Convicted extremist offenders in England and Wales	Radicalized individuals in and after detention	Persons +12 years old who shows signs of Islamic radicalization	Inmates that are suspected of being vulnerable to or already in a process of radicalisation	Radicalized individuals in and outside the prison context	Individuals deemed vulnerable to radicalization
Intended users	Forensic mental health experts, national security analysts, police, probation, prison staff	In context of prison: front-line staff and decision-makers	Professionals, including prison and probation staff who are managing detained individuals; religious advisors; volunteers and academia	Police, security services and "care-providers"	Prison staff	Police and social workers	Local authorities, education staff, mental health care professionals
Training required?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Unknown

Table 2. Use of risk assessment tools

Objectives

As can be seen in Table 2, the objective of the tools ranges from creating a general awareness of radicalisation to an explicit focus on assessing the level of radicalisation and tools that are used to inform decision-making about for example intervention plans in or after detention. The objective of both the IR46 and the VAF is to enable professionals to structure their 'gut-feeling' and create a (more) comprehensive view of a specific individual on the basis of which they can determine if there is actual cause for concern and if yes, take appropriate action. The IR46 functions as an early-warning method for professionals within the security field to identify signs of Islamic radicalisation.[97] The VAF was developed with the objective to support local partnerships that work with the Channel program to guide their decisions on whether an individual needs support from Channel and the kind of support to address their vulnerability to radicalisation. The Radar is a protocol designed to identify individuals that could benefit from early interventions (not too high risk, not to low risk) and aid the decision making process of police staff and civil servants on the municipality level, thus providing a justification for interventions and treatment.

The RRAP, the Radar, the ERG22+, the VERA-2R and the SQAT can be helpful to make informed decisions about, for example, placement issues in detention and early release. The objective of the RRAP is twofold; on the one hand, it enables prison staff *"to identify risk, and screen and assess inmates that may be at risk of becoming radicalized"*[98] and on the other hand it enables them to train fellow staff members in using the tool.[99] The assessment will be used by a decision maker to decide on the category of risk or the need for intervention.[100] The ERG22+ is also used to inform decisions on extremist offenders. According to Lloyd and Dean (2015):

> *"The ERG has played a critical role in informing decisions that concern convicted extremist offenders across NOMS, including how they are managed, supervised, and monitored; what interventions they complete; whether these have affected risk; and whether and how they should be located, relocated, released, and reintegrated into society or recalled into custody."*[101]

Furthermore, the ERG22+ provides an approach to identify, manage, and address extremism for law enforcement agencies and correctional agencies.[102] The VERA-2R functions as an analytical protocol to assess the individual's risk of radicalisation to violent extremism. Additionally, the VERA-2R can be used to obtain information on the likelihood of violent extremist action and ways to prevent this; to assist in intervention and to monitor efficacy. The SQAT has two objectives; on the one hand it can measure the level of radicalisation of an individual, which can be used to inform risk decisions. On the other hand, SQAT can also be used by an assessor to measure the impact of a deradicalisation program over time through re-assessment over several time intervals.[103]

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[97] Politie Nederland, *Islamitisch Radicaliseringsmodel*, (2017).
[98] R2PRIS, "Multi-level in-Prison Radicalisation Prevention – Certification Training".
[99] Ibid.
[100] European Commission, *Conference on Radicalisation in Prisons. Event Report European Commission.*
[101] Lloyd and Dean, ""The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p.49.
[102] Ibid, p. 40.
[103] "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," *ICCT*.

End-users

Some of the tools are intended for use by multiple professions (i.e. the IR46 is intended for professionals of the police intelligence services and so-called 'care-providers'), while other tools are specifically designed for a specific profession or professional (i.e. the RRAP is developed for professionals working in a prison setting). What almost all end-users of the tools have in common is that they are likely to be in close contact with individuals deemed at risk of (further) radicalisation. Besides professionals who work in the security field, academic experts who use tools to assess the effect of deradicalisation programs. An overview of all (potential) end-users for each tool is presented in Table 2.

A distinction can be made between tools that require training before people can use the tools and tools that can be used without training. The Radar, the VERA-2R, the ERG22+, the SQAT and the RRAP all require some level of training (in some cases trainees will receive certification after which they are deemed 'Certified Users'). The developers of the ERG22+ specifically state that only very experienced assessors, such as fully qualified forensic psychologists and experienced probation officers, should use ERG22+. Also, they argue that users should have experience with professional guidelines and require a level of political awareness in the area of extremism. [104] The training for the RRAP, for professionals at different levels of the prison administration, consists of a combination of both online and offline training. Professionals that obtain a certification upon completion of the RRAP training will be allowed to train other colleagues in the use of RRAP as well. On the contrary, the use of the Radar is restricted to trained users. Trained users cannot share the tool with colleagues or train others in the use of the tool. The training consists of a two-day training program with 70% of the training focusing on learning what the different concepts of radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism entail and what the differences are between disengagement and de-radicalisation. A specific section of the training is devoted to specifying the objective of the use of the tool for the specific group of users, including a discussion on what success looks like.

The developers of VERA-2R have developed a protocol that only allows people who are trained by the developers to use the tool, to preclude that people will use the tool in an inadequate way.[105] The training for VERA-2R includes background information on the VERA-2R, the knowledge base related to violent extremism, terrorism and the radicalisation process. Users acquire experience during the training program in applying the VERA-2R indicators and completing assessments using actual case studies. The SQAT can be used by anyone who has received the appropriate training. In the training for the SQAT the focus is among others on the methodology of the survey used in SQAT, how to instruct the survey takers and how to respond to questions from individuals who have to fill out the survey.[106]

Institutional Context

A distinction can be made between tools that are structurally used, because they are part of repetitive procedures (e.g. the intake procedure in a prison), and tools that are

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[104] Martine Herzog-Evans, "A Comparison of Two Structured Professional Judgment Tools for Violent Extremism and Their Relevance in the French Context," *European Journal of Probation* 10, no.1 (2018): pp. 3-27.
[105] Ibid.
[106] "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," p. 17, p. 19.

used on a more ad-hoc basis, for example when professionals have a 'gut-feeling' that something is off, or to assess the level of radicalisation when they believe that someone shows signs of radicalisation.

Since 2011, the ERG22+ is embedded within the NOMS and is used to support informed decision making about sentence planning, relocation, reintegration and release. [107] Besides the ERG22+, the Radar, the VERA-2R and the SQAT can also be used within prison settings. They can inform decisions regarding the handling of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) and on the effectiveness of risk management and interventions regarding disengagement. The SQAT can be used upon arrival of an inmate and will serve as a baseline assessment in the sense that the prison environment has not yet influenced the inmate. The RRAP was also created for use within a prison setting, but no information is available as to whether it is used structurally or on a more ad-hoc basis. The IR46, the VAF, and the Radar can be used on a more ad-hoc basis when a professional deems it necessary to assess the level of radicalisation of an individual or to make decisions about appropriate management and interventions.

Required Information

The information that is required to complete an assessment varies across the risk assessment tools. The SQAT, which is a self-questionnaire, only requires information provided by the individual that is assessed. In contrast, all other tools are filled out by the professional rather than the subject him or herself. The Radar focuses on observable behavioural indicators related to an individual's identity (social context, ideology and criminal action orientation) and their potential for coping. This information can be sourced from the observations of the users themselves, court reports, other professionals that can provide information regarding the individual, or from other individuals in the person's social environment. Similarly, the VERA-methodology *"relies on the evidence-base obtained from court records, other professional reports, documents relating to the individual in prison, observations and other information from other prisons and agencies and reports and observations concerning the individual of interest by persons who come into interaction with her or him."*[108] Herzog-Evans, in his article 'A comparison of two structured professional judgment tools for violent extremism and their relevance in the French context', evaluated the VERA-2 and the ERG22+, and he concludes that the ERG22+ has a simpler structure and requires less classified information to complete the tool.[109] In line with this, Van der Heide and Schuurman concluded in their evaluation of the Dutch approach to reintegrating jihadists, that practitioners from Dutch Probation were enthusiastic about the VERA-2R, but most probationers hardly used the tool due to capacity issues and a lack of information.[110] Also, the IR46 seems to rely among others on observations of the professional that is using the tool and on contact with the individual in question. For the RRAP it is not clear which information is required to use the tool in a proper and adequate way.

According to the developers of IR46 it is case dependent how much information is required to have a valid assessment. There is no minimum level of information that is

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[107] Lloyd and Dean, ""The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p. 40.

[108] Pressman et al., "VERA-2R: A Structured Professional Judgment Approach."

[109] Herzog-Evans, "A Comparison of Two Structured Professional Judgment Tools for Violent Extremism and Their Relevance in the French Context," pp. 3-27.

[110] Liesbeth J. Heide and Bart W. Schuurman, *Re-Integratie van Delinquenten met een Extremistische Achtergrond: Evaluatie van de Nederlandse Aanpak* (The Hague: Institute of Security and Global Affairs, 2018).

required for using the tool. The developers of IR46 argue based on user experience of the IR46 that the IR46 can provide a valid assessment even with 95% unknown information. At the same time, they acknowledge that the validity is also dependent on how often re-assessment takes place and on the treatment of the individual. Regarding the VAF and the Radar there is no information available on how much information is required to have a valid assessment.

Practical Implications

The practical implications for the use of the tools vary across the risk assessment tools. In this paragraph we will give information on the use of the tool in practice. The VERA-2R and the ERG22+ also provide clear guidance regarding the use the tool, including for example a proper explanation of the indicators used in these tools.[111] Additionally, record-forms (on paper) for the implementation of the tools are provided. All three assessments can be used with the input of interviews with the individual, but both the Radar and the VERA-2R can also be used without an interview with the individual in question. The findings of both tools to be integrated into a final report by the user, which sets out the overall risk assessment (low, moderate or high) together with the significant risk domains, risk indicators, and protective indicators. For the VERA-2R, the assessor has to make two types of judgements. First, the assessor has to decide whether or not an item (or indicator) is present in relation to the individual in question and rate this item for severity (low, medium or high). Second, the responses need to be integrated into a final judgement, which gives insight into the risk for violence of the examined individual. For this final judgement, the assessor needs to include the context for the evaluation.[112]

According to the developers of the ERG22+, assessors can structure their interviews using four main questions instead of working through a list of (22+) factors. Furthermore, the assessors are advised to use their judgement regarding the factors (i.e. they need to consider during the completion of the assessment which role the factors played in the offense as well as what role the factors could play in the future). Finally, a written report has to be created based on the analysis to inform decisions and risk management strategies.[113] Furthermore, the developers of the ERG22+ recommend their tool to be used by multiple assessors instead of just one because it is unlikely that one assessor can complete the tool based on skills, knowledge and information. Also, it reduces the risk that the assessment can be influenced by manipulation or intimidation.[114]

For the SQAT, the inmate needs to fill out the questionnaire individually, ideally within an environment where the inmate cannot be disturbed by others. Furthermore, a trained and certified user should be present in case any questions arise.[115] To finalise the assessment and generate an overall risk outcome, the scores for each of the questions need to be calculated using a formula, by a trained assessor.[116] Compared to the VERA-2R, the ERG22+ and the SQAT have no specific (quantified) end-score as an outcome. Regarding the other tools (the RRAP, the Radar, VAF and the IR46), no information is available on how the tool should be used in practice.

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[111] Lloyd and Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p. 47; Pressman et al., "VERA-2R: A Structured Professional Judgment Approach."
[112] Pressman, "Risk Assessment Decisions for Violent Political Extremism," p. 31.
[113] Lloyd and Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," p. 47.
[114] Herzog-Evans, "A Comparison of Two Structured Professional Judgment Tools for Violent Extremism and Their Relevance in the French Context."
[115] "Inmate Needs Survey for Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison. User Manual," *ICCT*, p. 21.
[116] Ibid, 22.

A common criticism related to the practical use of all SPJ tools (the Radar, the ERG22+, the VERA-2R, the VAF and the IR46) is that it requires both much information and it can take a long time to complete a single assessment, thus making the use of SPJ resource-intensive.[117] Comparatively, this makes the one self-questionnaire tool, the SQAT, much easier to implement as it requires neither much time nor information on account of the professionals. At the same time, the self-questionnaire methodology is more at risk of 'socially desirable' answers by the inmates filling them out. Nonetheless, the developers of the SQAT have concluded that in many penitentiary environments, especially when detainees are already sentenced, are highly ideologically committed and/or in context where participation in terrorist groups is much more accepted, there is both willingness and openness to fill out the questionnaire honestly.

Conclusion

The threat of radicalisation towards violent extremism, in and outside of prison settings, has increased in Europe over the past years in the context of the FTF phenomenon and the rise in the criminalisation of preparatory offenses. In line with this, the interest in— and demand for—risk assessment of the degree of radicalisation of either suspected or sentenced violent extremists has grown, in academia but even more so from a policymakers. In response, many risk assessment tools have been developed world wide in recent years by different experts (psychologists, academics, criminologists, practitioners), in different institutional contexts (prison, police work, local level, mental health care sector), tailoring to different target audiences (jihadist, left-wing, right wing) and with different objectives (determining risk of reoffending, risk of radicalising others, degree of radicalisation, or likeliness to use violence). However, because terrorism remains a threat with low prevalence rates, the existing evidence base is too small to scientifically validate any of these tools.

Due to the lack of evaluations of these tools, an oft-voiced criticism is that all these tools remain at the level of structuring and categorising information, providing a rationale for action plans and interventions, but none of them have predictive abilities. Thus, the term 'tool' can come across as misleading as when not properly informed, users run the risk of expecting a silver bullet that will allow them to assess future behaviour or recidivism, which is not the case for all these tools. Nonetheless, it is essential that professionals in the field, who work on a daily basis with these individuals, be enabled to structurally gather information to identify indicators relevant to their specific objective. Thus, it is important to demystify some of the language used in this field and to take a pragmatic approach, including for example acknowledging that an approach like Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) really does not mean much more than structuring the common sense and intuition of professionals to support their judgments. While the holy grail of risk assessment—predictive tooling—is a far off point on the horizon as it is simply too early stages to be able to develop it, the currently available methods and tools are often quite clear in their scope and do not necessarily pretend to be much more than an aid or a basis for decision-making either. And that is exactly where their main value lies in the field of terrorism.

In a field where the most often used terms like radicalisation and terrorism are not just not agreed upon, but even more so, have an inherently political nature with severe and far-reaching consequences for the individuals labelled as such, the importance of

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[117] Liesbeth J. van der Heide and Bart W. Schuurman, "Reintegrating Terrorists in the Netherlands: Evaluating the Dutch Approach," *Journal for Deradicalisation*, 17 (2018): pp. 196-239.

explicating what one means and what one agrees on in daily practices cannot be underestimated. It is essential to create as much clarity as possible about why individuals are labelled as radicalised, extremist or terrorist and the relation with the underlying indicators that provide the evidence for those labels. Thus, despite lack of evaluations[118] and the ability to predict future behaviour, the current suite of tools available provide a very valuable starting point to enable professionals to determine the individual's suitability for interventions and treatment including prevention or rehabilitation programs.

This article sought to provide a comprehensive and comparative overview of the main tools, protocols, guidelines, or approaches used in the field across three dimensions: (1) the objective of the tools; (2) the underlying methodology and structure of the tools; and (3) the practical implications for using these tools. With this, the authors hope to both allow practitioners and policymakers to better navigate the often muddy, copy-righted, and often expensive waters of the world of risk assessment of violent extremism—as well as to facilitate their decision-making process when it comes to determining what approach is best suited to their needs.

Finally, below, a few considerations—in no necessary order of priority—are provided that the authors deem essential to take into account when starting to think about using risk assessment in their own professional circles.

- Given the different methodologies used, most value lies in combining the use of quantitative and qualitative tools in order to offset the pros and cons of both approaches. In other words, while quantitative tools like the SQAT have the upside of being easy to use and do not require many resources, they have the downside of being vulnerable to social desirability bias on account of the individual filling out the questionnaires. However, they can be used as a valuable source of information for more qualitatively oriented tools (all SPJ tools), which are generally more resource-intensive both in terms of information and time requirements. Combing the two, allows professionals to start measuring change while also making sense of change qualitatively.
- Practical use > need for standardisation for practical purposes (info exchange etc.); need for differentiation of different typologies; main conclusion: it's both very important and requires extensive knowledge while at the same time it is time-resource intensive; so no use training everyone, better to have small teams with experts fed by info from larger professional groups.
- Always start with clear objective: When thinking about implementing risk assessment for violent extremism, the most important consideration that needs to be made at the outside is to determine the objective of the risk assessment. A clear distinction should be made, for example, between assessing the risk of recruiting other detainees into a radical network or the risk of re-offending after prison.
- Given the level of knowledge and expertise (and often training and certification) required to conduct risk assessment of violent extremism in an appropriate manner, it is more commendable to centralise expertise: training a small team of experts within a given organisation extensively and providing a more generic, broad type of training focused on awareness and identifying potential risks.
- Risk assessment of VEO's is an elaborate undertaking. It requires much information to be processed. Most professionals establishing such assessments are relatively new in this specific field of expertise. Evidence based tools can assist them in their assessments;

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[118] Lloyd, *Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory*, p. 18, p. 46.

- Many SPJ instruments can be implemented for various objectives. This supports countries and organisations in their search for an appropriate tool. However, it does require that decision-makers are aware that not all tools can be applied for all VEO-objectives.
- In addition to informing and facilitating users, it is essential that top management is involved in the implementation of a tool as well. Top management does not only have to decide on the goals of the implementation, but also on the availability of the required information to conduct an assessment.

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About the Authors

Liesbeth van der Heide

Liesbeth van der Heide is a Senior Research Fellow at ICCT. At ICCT she coordinates ICCT's activities in the field of (counter-) terrorism in prison, a project that focuses on prisons in North-Africa and South East Asia and includes implementing threat and risk assessment measures to identify and assess violent extremism. She also works as a Researcher and Lecturer at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA), Leiden University since 2011 and as a Research Fellow at George Washington University's Program on Extremism.

Marieke van der Zwan

Marieke van der Zwan holds a master's degree in Crisis and Security Management from Leiden University, where she focused on the role of front line workers in the detection and prevention of radicalisation. Currently, Marieke is a Senior Inspector at the Inspectorate of Justice and Security. Before, she worked for several years as a Researcher and Program Leader at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) and the Centre for Professional Learning (CPL) at Leiden University. Furthermore, she researched the role families play during the processes of dealing with persons who travel to, or return from conflict areas, commissioned by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC).

Maarten van Leyenhorst

Maarten van Leyenhorst is currently working as Senior Progam Official for the Approach on Radicalization and Extremism within the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency. He's got masters in both forensic and international criminology and has worked for several years in the specialized Unit of Dutch Probation on Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalization (TER).

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Liesbeth van der Heide, Marieke van der Zwan, and Maarten van Leyenhorst
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ICCT The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) is an independent think and do tank providing multidisciplinary policy advice and practical, solution-oriented implementation support on prevention and the rule of law, two vital pillars of effective counterterrorism.

ICCT's work focuses on themes at the intersection of countering violent extremism and criminal justice sector responses, as well as human rights-related aspects of counterterrorism. The major project areas concern countering violent extremism, rule of law, foreign fighters, country and regional analysis, rehabilitation, civil society engagement and victims' voices.

Functioning as a nucleus within the international counter-terrorism network, ICCT connects experts, policymakers, civil society actors and practitioners from different fields by providing a platform for productive collaboration, practical analysis, and exchange of experiences and expertise, with the ultimate aim of identifying innovative and comprehensive approaches to preventing and countering terrorism.

Contact ICCT

T: +31 (0)70 763 0050
E: info@icct.nl